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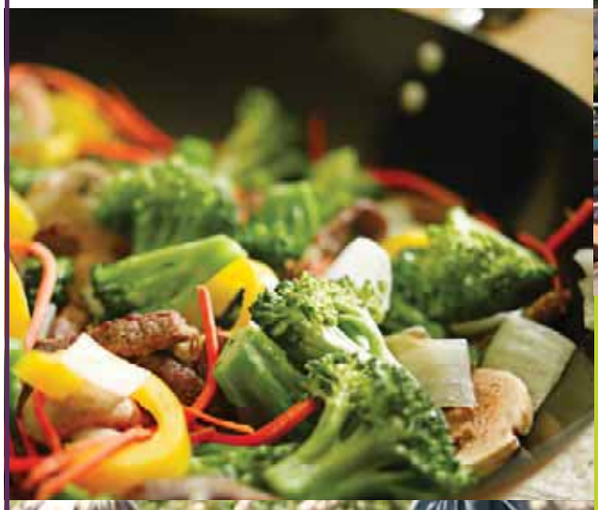

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TOP COURT SAYS IT CAN NOT UPHOLD LOWER COURT DECISION TO UNBAN HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR PAGE 30

Mailbox not as personable as your mailman

Canada Post decision to nix door-to-door delivery will take a toll on lonely seniors, says Toronto postman PAGE 4

One way to get yourself heard: Drink poison

Protesters in China knock back pesticide, saying earlier demonstrations brought only jail and beatings PAGE 20

Hybrid tech is simply phabulous

Part phone, part tablet, the 'phablet' is set to dominate in 2014 as people play more games, watch videos PAGE 32

Hey, get out of here! This is a public meeting

Report. Ombudsman says councillors will try every trick in the book to gather in secret

Behind closed doors

"Hanky-panky continues to take place in the backrooms, and councils are continuing to cling to cloak-and-dagger old-school boardroom politics."
Ontario ombudsman André Marin

Some Ontario municipal councils are "addicted" to secrecy and go to great lengths to keep their residents in the dark, says ombudsman André Marin.

On Wednesday, Marin delivered his second annual report on local government transparency, finding that 19 of 96 meetings investigated by his office were found to be illegal.

"There is, in my view, a putrefactive decay in democracy at the municipal government level due to the insistence on officials to continue conducting city business secretly and illegally," Marin told a Queen's Park press council.

Marin said not only are there no legal consequences for holding secret meetings, he accuses the province of enabling the practice by not introducing penalties.

The general rule of thumb is that private meetings can only be held when dealing with property and personnel.

Of the 444 municipalities in the province, only 191 have agreed to ombudsman oversight.

Pat Vanini, executive director for the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, downplayed Marin's findings, noting that municipalities host 22,000 meetings a year.

"Closed-meeting investigations reflect concerns about less than 1 per cent of all municipal agenda items," Vanini said in an email statement.

Marin said some municipal councillors will try every "trick" possible to hold secret meetings, including posting wrong times for meetings.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME ...

The Leafs' Mark Fraser gets jammed hard along the boards by the Los Angeles Kings' Jeff Carter on Wednesday at the Air Canada Centre. Carter scored the winning goal for the Kings, which squeaked out a 3-1 victory. See story, page 51. RICK MADONIK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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TDSB set to review raises

School board. Trustees defend decision in wake of auditor's report

Toronto trustees voted unanimously on Wednesday night to review controversial raises given to senior staff, as well as look at trustee expenses, as they begin to respond to concerns raised in an auditor's report.

Trustees, however, including Chair Chris Bolton, stressed there is no way Ontario's Ministry of Education did not know that senior staff were receiving raises — something the audit by Ernst and Young scolded the board for, saying the raises were unauthorized because of an overall freeze on public sector wages in the province.

In an interview with the Torstar News Service after the votes, Bolton said one of the original memos from the ministry "said senior staff could be one of the potential groups that could be part of a settlement" — which in Toronto auditors estimated cost almost $1.3 million.

"Eventually over time it became a little less clear, but we weren't the only ones," he said. "The fact is we know many other school boards have been contacted about the situation but we couldn't all have misunderstood."

Bolton will meet with ministry representatives on Friday.

Mike Semansky, a spokesperson for Education Minister Liz Sandals, said in an email that "as noted in the audit, the board chose not to follow advice received indicating that the wage freeze should apply to senior executives."

Trustee Sheila Cary-Meagher, who had a motion before the board asking that all trustee expenses be published in detail, said trustees did that back in 2001 but somehow over the years the practice stopped.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

'Much worse than I thought'

Director of Education Donna Quan asked the ministry back to audit contracts after trustee Elizabeth Moyer, who as chair of the audit committee, wrote to the ministry about her concerns over contracts and spending. On Wednesday night, she said the audit was "much worse than I thought" but that she expects it to bring more transparency to the board.

Mayor a no-show for showdown with Blair

Toronto police Chief Bill Blair appeared at City Hall Wednesday to present the police budget to the executive committee. The much-anticipated showdown between Blair and Mayor Rob Ford did not happen. The mayor was busy with other official business and Coun. Doug Ford played the polite card.

BERNARD WEIL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Brampton mayor's car cash chopped

Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell has a $23,500 car allowance and a city-leased $90,000 Lincoln Navigator. DAVID COOPER/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Brampton's new budget for 2014 will further curtail what Mayor Susan Fennell and other councillors can spend taxpayers' money on.

But she will get to keep using her $1,400-a-month leased Lincoln Navigator SUV.

A day after council cut her car allowance by $10,000, it was explained that the Lincoln is leased till the end of the term during Wednesday evening's council meeting to approve the 2014 budget.

Coun. John Sprovieri called the Lincoln a "gas guzzler" and asked why Fennell needed such an expensive vehicle on top of her $46,000-a-year limo service.

Coun. Sandra Hames said Fennell needs a driver because of her busy schedule.

Other councillors said Brampton residents have expressed widespread anger over Fennell's cost to taxpayers. She expensed $186,000 in less than three years, has $70,000 a year in driver and car costs, and her $213,000 salary in 2012 made her the highest paid mayor in Canada.

Quoted

"Look at Mayor McCallion, here's this 92-year old mayor and she drives herself."

Coun. John Sprovieri

Spending on things such as personalized barbecue aprons, which Fennell spent $2,100 on, is no longer allowed.

Fennell will also lose $60,000 a year for community sponsorships.

Meanwhile, the 2014 budget might mean Brampton's debt-free status will no longer be maintained.

Council was set to approve a proposed 2.9 per cent increase to the city's portion of the 2014 property tax bill that will have to be amended later to find $44 million for long overdue road widening.

That amount over the next two years will have to be paid by taking on debt or reallocating money from the proposed capital budget.

The increase represents 1.2 per cent on the total 2014 tax bill for a Brampton property owner, as the city portion is blended with the Region of Peel amount (a .6 per cent increase on the region's share of the total bill has been proposed) and the provincial education portion (no increase is expected for the education amount).

The total tax increase for Brampton property owners is projected at 1.8 per cent. Brampton's share of that increase represents an extra $51 on a home assessed at $364,000.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Public opinion

Better a TTC hike than an increase in property tax: Poll

Nobody likes to pay more for public services. But in Toronto, it seems a TTC fare hike is more palatable than a property-tax increase.

A Forum Research poll found nearly half of Torontonians don't believe the nickel increase on the price of a TTC token, taking it to $2.70 as of New Year's Day, is necessary.

Only 41 per cent of poll respondents said the fare hike is needed, while an unusually large number — 14 per cent — answered they don't know.

Still, that's a much higher rate of acceptance than the 34 per cent who agreed that a proposed 2.5 per cent property-tax hike is necessary.

The TTC fare increase, which raises the cost of a monthly Metropass by $5.25, to $133.75 a month, amounts to just over five per cent for most riders.

Even though it's about double the tax increase percentage-wise, it may seem like a much smaller cost to many residents, said Forum president Lorne Bozinoff.

"I think there's a couple of things that underlie the approval of the fare increase. Number 1, it's a user-pay thing. Second, certainly the five cents looks like a nominal amount. Number 3, there is some idea that the TTC has been improving service," he said.

While some commuters could avoid paying more to use the TTC by driving or finding another mode of transportation, the property tax is probably seen as unavoidable, said Bozinoff.

"Even if you're a renter, it's somehow in the back of your mind it's in the rent anyway," he said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Numbers breakdown

The property-tax increase was particularly unpopular among respondents who supported fiscal conservative Mayor Rob Ford in the last municipal election. Only 15 per cent of Ford Nation respondents thought the increase was needed, compared with 66 per cent of those who supported George Smitherman and 54 per cent who supported Joe Pantalone three years ago.

Say bye to your friendly neighbourhood mailman

A matter of money.
Leo Gaspari is part of a dying breed, with Canada Post phasing out door-to-door service in cities

The community mailboxes tasked with saving Canada Post from financial doom have individually locked compartments but none of the pizzazz of mailman Leo Gaspari.

The postal furniture is projected to save the crown corporation $400 to $500 million a year, but the boxes can't ask seasonally appropriate trivia questions, they can't talk to lonely seniors who might not have anybody else and they certainly can't pet your dog.

That is the purview of the door-to-door mail carrier, a soon-to-be relic of the pre-Internet era.

Retirees

With an average age of 48, Canada Post expects 15,000 of its employees to retire in the next five years — "more than enough to allow for the reduction of between 6,000 and 8,000 positions," the Crown corporation said in a press release.

On Wednesday, Canada Post announced plans to phase out door-to-door delivery in urban areas in the next five years, one part of a five-pronged strategy to keep the mail service sustainable by requiring fewer employees.

As an oft-maligned Canada Post employee, Gaspari's been bitten by dogs three times and slips on the ice once a year, on average, on his route near Don Mills and Lawrence.

"I am an overpaid, underworked part of society, that's what they say," he says. "But I learned to deal with it."

For years now, declining letter-mail volume has forced Canada Post to streamline operations. It used to be that several people would cover this route, he explains.

"Now I'm the only one," he says. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Leo Gaspari delivers mail along his route near Don Mills and Lawrence on Wednesday. Canada Post has unveiled a plan that includes phasing out door-to-door delivery. RANDY RISLING/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

CEO defends Metrolinx against critical report

Metrolinx CEO Bruce McCuaig
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

There's no public appetite for stopping Toronto's transit expansion in its tracks to second-guess projects that are already underway, says Metrolinx CEO Bruce McCuaig.

"Sometimes we spend too much energy reviewing decisions time and time again," he said.

McCuaig was responding to a report published Wednesday by the urban think-tank Neptis Foundation. It is deeply critical of some of the cornerstone projects in Metrolinx's Big Move transportation plan.

Quoted

"We have to listen carefully to the community and what their interests and concerns are and be responsive to them." Metrolinx CEO Bruce McCuaig

The report suggests that the Eglinton-Scarborough Crosstown LRT, the Scarborough subway and LRTs on Finch and Sheppard could potentially blow billions without attracting enough ridership to ease the region's congestion crisis.

The author contends that the business cases simply don't justify building those projects.

But McCuaig defended his organization's planning diligence, saying Metrolinx was the first transit authority in North America to analyze projects through a business-case lens. But the business case is one aspect of decision-making.

"We have to listen carefully to the community and what their interests and concerns are and be responsive to them," he said, adding that there are no plans to remove stops from the Eglinton Crosstown as the Neptis report suggests.

"When the Eglinton Crosstown goes into service in 2020 and a lot of those customers' trips are going to be reduced by 20 minutes in each direction, I think those people living along those corridors are going to be saying, 'Boy we could have done this faster,'" said McCuaig.

The Big Move itself is also about to get a "refresh" next year, linking it more closely to the provincial growth plan.

The Neptis report looks at 16 of the 60 projects in the Big Move, said McCuaig. "It doesn't evaluate the implications of implementing the entire plan, which is really what our objective is." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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22 Dixon Rd.
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25 The West Mall, Unit 1963
3015 Bloor St. W
1735 Kipling Ave.
250 The East Mall, Kiosk #316
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7205 Goreway Dr.
1100 Burnhamthorpe Rd.
3021 Argentia Rd.
789 Taunton Rd. E
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2150 Burnhamthorpe Rd. W
60 Bristol Rd. E
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1800 Sheppard Ave. E
Cedarbrae Mall
1900 Eglinton Ave. E
3300 McNicoll Ave.
1291 Kennedy Rd.
2555 Victoria Park Ave.
411 Kennedy Rd.
3495 Lawrence Ave.
1448 Lawrence Ave. E
5661 Steeles Ave. E, Unit 5
19 Milliken Blvd., Unit U
2490 Gerrard St. E
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300 Borough Dr., Unit 49
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31 Disera Dr., Unit 140
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Auditor's report fallout.
Wynne 'deeply concerned' about OPG's generous pay

The Opposition demanded even more heads roll at Ontario Power Generation Wednesday following a damning auditor general's report that found salaries, bonuses and pensions at the government-owned utility are overly generous.

"We are today calling for the firing of the OPG chair, the CEO and the minister of energy," said Progressive Conservative energy critic Lisa MacLeod. "The auditor's report showed a culture of entitlement that has misused ratepayer's money for handsome bonuses, very generous pension plans and almost 8,000 people making over $100,000 when people are having a tough time paying their energy bills."

OPG fired its chief financial officer and two vice-presidents Tuesday after the auditor reported the utility more than doubled the size of "its highly paid executive and senior management group" since 2005, with some of them eligible for bonuses of up to $1.3 million and pensions ranging from $180,000 to $760,000 a year.

PC Leader Tim Hudak called the compensation figures "jaw-dropping," and wanted to know why Premier Kathleen Wynne had not fired Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli because of this "scandalous mess."

Lisa MacLeod TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

"What's going to happen to your energy minister when you see this kind of debacle on his watch," Hudak asked in the legislature. "Where is the bar?"

Wynne ducked Hudak's question, but told reporters she was worried about the culture of entitlement at OPG, and promised the government would introduce legislation next year to give it more control over public-sector salaries.

"I'm deeply concerned about what seems to be the culture in that organization, which is why changes are being made and we're going to bring in legislation to actually allow us to have more ability to control those compensation packages," she said.

"No government has had the authority that we are going to put in place in terms of controlling the compensation packages." THE CANADIAN PRESS

High-rankers on the rise

94

OPG has 94 executives that it lists as being "vice-presidents and above," an increase of 40 in seven years.

'Homophobic' jokes not acceptable: Radio show

Dean Blundell Show.
Apology comes after judge rejects call for inquiry into behaviour of co-host who served as jury foreman in sexual assault trial

A Toronto shock-jock radio show has apologized for making "homophobic" jokes about a sexual assault trial for which the show's producer and co-host served as jury foreman.

The apology came a day after a judge rejected a call for an inquiry into the conduct of Derek Welsman, who gabbed and chortled about the case before and after the verdict on the Dean Blundell Show.

Welsman was the foreman of a jury that convicted a man for sexually assaulting three men he met at a Toronto bathhouse.

"We both made rude, homophobic and inappropriate remarks, which were offensive and unacceptable. We offended a lot of listeners, our families and our friends," Dean Blundell said in an audio clip posted to the show's website Wednesday.

"Those conversations were not entertaining. They were plain and simply wrong. For this, I sincerely apologize."

Welsman did not issue his own apology on the show's website. His lawyer said Welsman will not make further comments while the matter is before the courts.

At the beginning of the trial, Welsman swore on a Bible and told a court he had no bias against homosexuals.

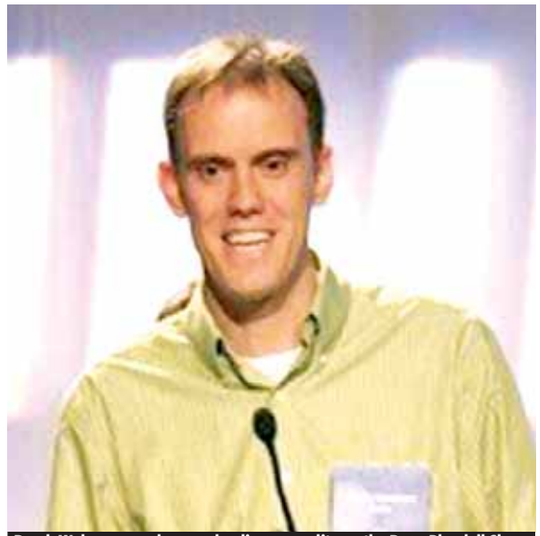
On air, he and the other radio personalities guffawed as they mocked gay men who visit bathhouses and the intelligence of the sex assault victims. They snickered as they imagined the perpetrator's excitement for prison showers.

"If anyone wants to get into the backdoor business, I can give you some tips," said foreman Welsman, prompting more laughter from his on-air colleagues.

Kathryn Wells, the lawyer of the convicted man, told the court Welsman's on-air conduct "made a mockery" of the court proceedings and tainted the guilty verdict that he, as jury foreman, read aloud Sept. 27.

Another possible avenue

"The Court of Appeal will have to decide whether this verdict has been tainted by (Welsman's) homophobic views." Kathryn Wells, convicted man's lawyer


Derek Welsman, producer and radio personality on the Dean Blundell Show, joked on-air about a sexual assault trial involving gay men on which he served as a juror. FACEBOOK

Wells had asked the trial judge to order an inquiry into the conduct of Welsman, who she says is biased against gay men and prejudged the case.

On Tuesday, Justice Faye McWatt rejected the call for an inquiry. Her ruling did not address whether Welsman's homophobic radio conduct affected the decisions he made as a juror.

Instead, she focused on whether any of the broadcasts could have influenced other members of the jury, who unanimously found the accused, Joshua Dowholis, guilty on nearly all counts.

The judge also said the matter may be brought before the Court of Appeal.

"It's disappointing that the court didn't seek to distance itself or express any concerns with what the jury foreman said, which his co-host and the radio station are now admitting was indeed homophobic," Wells said. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Licence plate recognition. OPP expand program, take aim at suspended drivers

Provincial police say they're expanding a program that was aimed at recovering stolen vehicles and licence plates to help take suspended drivers off Ontario's roads.

Police say about 250,000 licence suspensions are issued each year in the province and suspended drivers are involved in an estimated 2.3 per cent of fatal motor vehicle collisions.

OPP are adding 27 additional vehicles to the current fleet of four equipped with the Automatic Licence Plate Recognition that is capable of scanning about 3,600 plates per hour.

The plates will be compared with a database of about eight million licence plates to detect those registered to suspended drivers, associated with stolen vehicles, reported stolen or missing, or that haven't been issued.

When the system produces a "hit" on a suspended driver and the driver is found to have a suspended licence, officers will immediately impound the vehicle for a minimum of 45 days.

Police will retain records for scanned plates that match the hot list for evidentiary purposes, while data for plates that do not generate a hit will be automatically deleted every 10 minutes. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rollout

Eight of the 27 new vehicles are being deployed in the GTA and the remaining vehicles will move between detachments across the province, with the rollout to be completed next month.

- Information and Privacy Commissioner Ann Cavoukian praised the privacy design used in the licence plate recognition system, saying law-abiding motorists won't have to worry about being tracked.

Skaters having an ice time at Harbourfront

Skaters enjoy the beats as they glide on the ice during DJ Skate Night at Harbourfront Centre's Natrel Rink. Santa will be making two stops at the Waterfront BIA's annual Winterfest this weekend. Some of the activities will include dogsledding demos, pet photos with Santa at PawsWay and Santa and his elves will be on board for the 8th annual Santa Cruise aboard Mariposa Cruises' Northern Spirit. CONTRIBUTED

Grandchild grabbed

3 teens sought in shocking robbery

Police are looking for three teens they say robbed a woman and tried to take her grandchild around Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue West last week.

Police say the woman's face was held so she couldn't scream.

One of the teens allegedly took hold of the child's neck and tried to lift the child out of the stroller. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Richmond Hill

Woman given 6 years for manslaughter

A 34-year-old Richmond Hill woman is headed to prison for six years for killing a 45-year-old man in 2010.

Renee Laurence was convicted of manslaughter last month in the fatal stabbing of Gregory Goodeve of Richmond Hill on Feb. 26, 2010. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Potent, long-lasting greenhouse gas discovered

PhD chemistry student Angela Hong helped discover a new chemical which is one of the worst greenhouse gases on record. RANDY RISLING/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

University of Toronto chemists have discovered a potent new greenhouse gas with the ability to persist for half a millennium in the earth's atmosphere.

The synthetic chemical, perfluorotributylamine (PFTBA), is 7,100 times more effective at causing climate change than one molecule of carbon dioxide over a 100-year time frame, the new research indicates.

"This highlights the unknown potential of what lives in the atmosphere," said Angela Hong, a PhD student who helped research the new study, published in Geophysical Research Letters on Nov. 27.

Like many scientific discoveries, this one started with a hunch. According to laboratory lore, Scott Mabury, a professor and principal investigator of the study, noticed a bucket of PFTBA sitting in the U of T chemistry building one day.

The bucket piqued his interest. Based on the chemical's makeup, Mabury guessed that the liquid could already exist in the air; it has multiple carbon-fluorine bonds that give it the unique ability to endure in the atmosphere.

"Despite the fact that the compound was so big, (PFTBA) still has a tendency to exist in the atmosphere," Hong said.

A team of five chemists perfected a method of testing the air using a special chamber designed just for the project.

The researchers found an average of 0.18 parts per trillion of PFTBA in the Toronto air samples. Carbon dioxide exists around 400 parts per million.

The discovery was concerning. The chemical is the most radiative efficient chemical ever found — which means it is especially adept at trapping heat. Coupled with its long lifespan, PFTBA could hold potential to impact climate change.

"It is novel for us from a scientific perspective," said Hong. "There may be similar compounds out there that have yet to be discovered." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Vancouver proposes sending gay councillor to rep city in Sochi

Winter Olympics.
Councillor says cities vying to host Olympics should create 'pride houses'

Vancouver, the host city that introduced the "Pride House" to the Olympics movement, could soon send its gay deputy mayor to Russia to fight against homophobia in sport.

City councillors are expected to endorse a resolution next week sending Coun. Tim Stevenson and two members of his Host City Pride House Mission Team to the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

Once there, the team will ask officials with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Paralympic Committee to include a non-discrimination clause for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the Games' charter and require future host cities to endorse pride houses in their bids.

Openly gay Vancouver city councillor and deputy mayor Tim Stevenson speaks to reporters after it was announced Wednesday that he may represent the city at the 2014 Sochi Olympics. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The trip would come about eight months after Russia passed a law that bans "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" and imposes fines on people who stage gay pride rallies.

"This isn't to challenge laws or to challenge the authorities," Stevenson told reporters in Vancouver Wednesday.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pride House

What he hopes to do

"I am going to try to convince the IOC that they need to change.

"This isn't about trying to raise international incidents, and there will probably be others that may do that, I don't know, but good luck to them. But I want to go to make sure that we speak to the IOC and get them to understand how important it is to include sexual orientation in their charter and how important it is to have a safe house in every Olympics from here on in."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Six-year-old suspended

O, let me kiss that hand!

The suspension of a six-year-old boy for kissing a girl at school is raising questions about whether the peck should be considered sexual harassment.

The boy's mother said officials at Lincoln School of Science and Technology in Canon City, Colo., are overreacting. Jennifer Saunders said her son was suspended once before for kissing the girl and had other disciplinary problems, and she was surprised to find out that he would be forced out of school again for several days.

First grader Hunter Yelton said that he has a crush on a girl at school and she likes him back.

"It was during class, yeah. We were doing reading group, and I leaned over and kissed her on the hand. That's what happened," he said.

Saunders said she saw nothing wrong with her son's display of affection, and was shocked when the school's principal brought up the term "sexual harassment" in a meeting. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arizona officer resigns after learning she's not American

A detective for Arizona's state police force has resigned following the discovery that she was living in the country illegally after being brought to the U.S. from Mexico by her family at a young age, the agency said Wednesday.

The former detective, Carmen Figueroa, apparently was told by her family that she was born in the U.S., though she was actually born in Sinaloa, Mexico, said Department of Public Safety spokesman Bart Graves.

Figueroa's status was discovered when the State Department processed a passport application submitted by her brother, who is serving in the U.S. military, Graves said.

Figueroa, 42, resigned Monday but would have been fired if she hadn't stepped down, Graves said. A criminal investigation continues, he said.

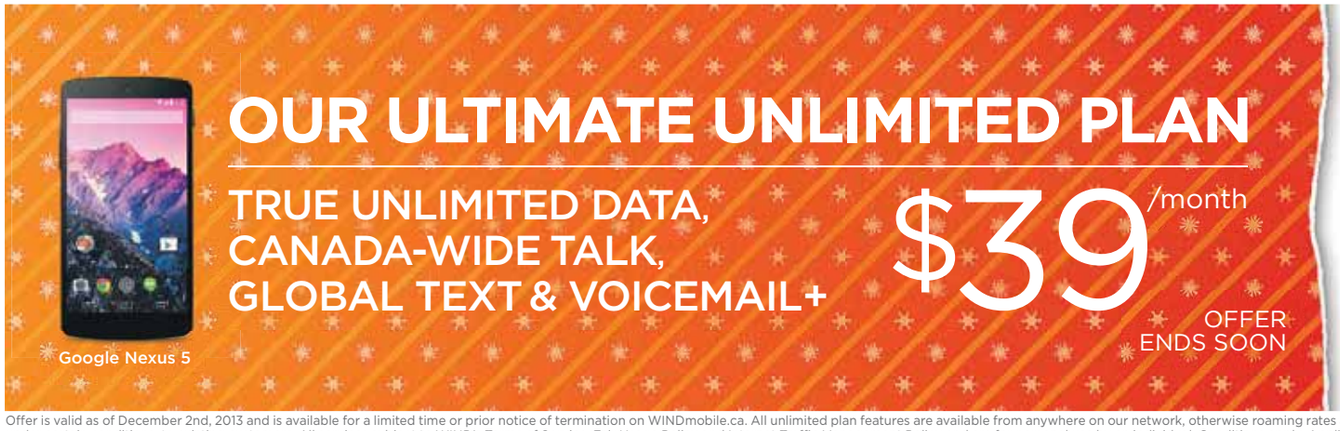
Arizona law requires sworn police officers to be U.S. citizens, and Graves said the state police agency would have terminated her for fraud and misrepresentation for "not meeting the qualifications."

Figueroa was with the department for 10 years, most of that time as a Highway Patrol officer.

She "had an exemplary record," Graves said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former Arizona state police detective Carmen Figueroa. ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



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Busted. Man running 'revenge porn' website charged with extortion

A San Diego man was charged Tuesday with operating a website that let people anonymously post explicit photographs of others so that he could extort hundreds of dollars from the victims.

Kevin Christopher Bollaert, 27, was arrested by California Department of Justice agents on 31 felony counts of conspiracy, identity theft and extortion.

Bollaert created the "revenge porn" website ugotposted.com a year ago, according to court documents. The site let users anonymously post more than 10,000 nude and explicit photographs of others without their permission.

Unlike other such sites, ugotposted.com required that the victim be identified by name, age and other information, leading to the identity theft allegations.

Documents say Bollaert charged victims a fee ranging from $249.99 to $350 to remove the images, using emails sent through a second website, changemyreputation.com.

The department says Bollaert told investigators during the investigation that he received about $900 each month from online advertising. However, the department said records from his changemyreputation.com PayPal account show that he received tens of thousands of dollars.

Both websites were inactive as of Tuesday. Bollaert's attorney did not return a telephone message seeking comment.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ottawa. Suspended senator denied press pass on Parliament Hill

The parliamentary press gallery has denied suspended senator Patrick Brazeau's bid for accreditation as a freelance reporter for Halifax-based Frank Magazine.

Press gallery president Daniel Thibeault said Brazeau wasn't eligible for membership because he's still a senator.

"So we feel as an executive that it's incompatible. You can't be a senator and a member of the press gallery at the same time," Thibeault said.

The Halifax edition of Frank — not to be confused with another publication in Ottawa with the same name — said the senator would be a "pain in the arse" to his former Senate colleagues, who suspended Brazeau and fellow ex-Conservative caucus members over their questionable expense claims.

Suspended senator Patrick Brazeau

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cellphone etiquette

British PM claims selfie defence

British Prime Minister David Cameron said he was only being polite when he posed for a selfie photo at Nelson Mandela's memorial service — deflecting complaints that he was being disrespectful during the occasion.

Cameron joined Barack Obama and Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt in the camera phone snap at the service in South Africa on Tuesday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

South Africa

Desmond Tutu's home robbed during memorial

Robbers hit retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu's home in Cape Town Tuesday — the same day the Nobel Peace Prize laureate spoke at the memorial service honouring his fellow anti-apartheid fighter Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg.

No arrests have been made so far, a police statement said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Interpreter at Mandela memorial was a fraud

Say what? Advocates for the deaf say sign language interpreter was a faker who just waved his arms around meaninglessly

U.S. President Barack Obama stands next to a fake sign language interpreter as he makes his speech at the memorial service for Nelson Mandela at the FNB Stadium in Soweto near Johannesburg on Tuesday. MATT DUNHAM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

As one world leader after another took the stage in a gigantic soccer stadium to pay homage to Nelson Mandela in Soweto, South Africa, the man at arm's reach from them appeared to be interpreting for the deaf at the hours-long memorial.

The unidentified man, who stood about one metre from U.S. President Barack Obama and other leaders, "was moving his hands around but there was no meaning in what he used his hands for," Bruno Druchen, the Deaf Federation of South Africa's national director, said.

When South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa told the crowd that former South African President F.W. de Klerk was among the guests in a VIP section, the man at his side used a strange pushing motion unknown in sign language that did not identify de Klerk or say anything about his presence in the stadium, said Ingrid Parkin, principal of the St. Vincent School for the Deaf in Johannesburg.

The closest the man's gestures at that point came to anything in sign language might possibly be the words for "running horse," "friend" or "beyond," she said, but only by someone who signs terribly. The man also used virtually no facial expressions to convey the often emotional speeches of the leader, an absolute must for sign language interpreters, Parkin said.

Collins Chabane, one of South Africa's two presidency ministers, told reporters the government is investigating "alleged incorrect use of sign language at the National Memorial Service" and did not identify the man but added the "government will report publicly on any information it may establish."

Outraged deaf people and sign language interpreters from Canada to China have complained about the man, Parkin said. "This man himself knows he cannot sign and he had the guts to stand on an international stage and do that," Parkin said. "It's absolutely impossible that he is any kind of interpreter. Or a language person at all, because he's not even using a language there."

The allegation of the use of a bogus sign interpreter was yet another example of bad organization at the service Tuesday. Other problems included breakdowns in public transportation that hindered mourners from getting to the soccer stadium and a faulty audio system that made the remarks of world leaders inaudible for many. Police also failed to search the first wave of crowds who rushed inside the stadium after authorities opened the gates just after dawn.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Repeat offender

The man also did sign interpretation at an event last year that was attended by South African President Jacob Zuma.

Future could be bright for would-be U.S. envoy to Canada

Bruce Heyman, a U.S. ambassador to Canada nominee, was spared hostile questioning Wednesday during his Senate confirmation hearing. By the time it was over, the committee chairman and Heyman were sharing chuckles about Old Saint Nick.

"You have displayed your diplomatic abilities in extraordinary fashion," Sen. Robert Menendez, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told the rookie diplomat.

This was after an exchange where he'd asked the nominee, tongue planted in cheek, whether an ongoing Arctic mapping project might result in Santa being declared a U.S. citizen.

Heyman's reply: the jolly North Pole resident is, in fact, a citizen of the world, and his safety is guaranteed by a joint Canada-U.S. military initiative, Norad.

In his opening remarks, Heyman touted his family ties to Canada. The Goldman Sachs executive said his family bond is hardly unique and is just one example of the "countless links" that bind the countries.

Heyman's appointment had been rumoured for months but was one of many executive appointments held up in the Senate throughout 2013.

If the Senate Foreign Relations committee recommends the appointment, and it's then approved in a vote on the Senate floor, the Chicago investment banker and prominent Democratic party fundraiser will succeed another Chicagoan Democratic party fundraiser as the U.S. envoy to Ottawa.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Meat. FDA makes move to phase out use of some antibiotics in livestock

Citing a potential threat to public health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is taking steps toward phasing out the use of some antibiotics in animals processed for meat.

The agency has announced that it will ask pharmaceutical companies to voluntarily stop labelling drugs important for treating human infection as acceptable for growth promotion in animals.

If the companies sign on — and one major company has already said it will — using those antibiotics to promote growth in animals would be illegal.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Protecting humans

The FDA move is designed to limit antibiotic-resistant diseases in humans. Repeated exposure to antibiotics can lead germs to become resistant to the drug so that it's no longer effective.

London

Two Damien Hirst artworks stolen

Two Damien Hirst artworks together valued at 33,000 pounds ($57,000) have been stolen from a London art gallery, police said Wednesday.

The Metropolitan Police said the two signed prints, Pyronin Y and Oleoylsarcosin, were taken from the Exhibitionist Gallery in west London in the early hours of Monday by a thief who forced the gallery doors. The works are among Hirst's series of Spot pieces, covered in multicoloured dots.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FDA denies approval for female sexual-desire drug

Flibanserin. Daily pill is designed to increase libido in women by acting on brain chemicals linked to mood and appetite

Cindy Whitehead holds a tablet of flibanserin in her office at Sprout Pharmaceuticals in Raleigh, N.C.

ALLEN G. BREED/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The multi-decade search for a pill that boosts sexual desire in women has hit another roadblock, raising questions about the future of efforts to develop a female equivalent to Viagra.

Sprout Pharmaceuticals said Wednesday it has reached an impasse with the United States Food and Drug Administration over its drug, flibanserin. The pill is designed to increase libido in women by acting on brain chemicals.

The FDA questions whether the drug's benefits outweigh its risks, considering its "modest" effectiveness and side effects including fatigue and nausea.

Sprout said it is appealing an October letter from the FDA that denied approval and asked for more information. But chances for approval appear slim: Of the 17 appeals FDA considered last year, 14 were denied, according to government figures.

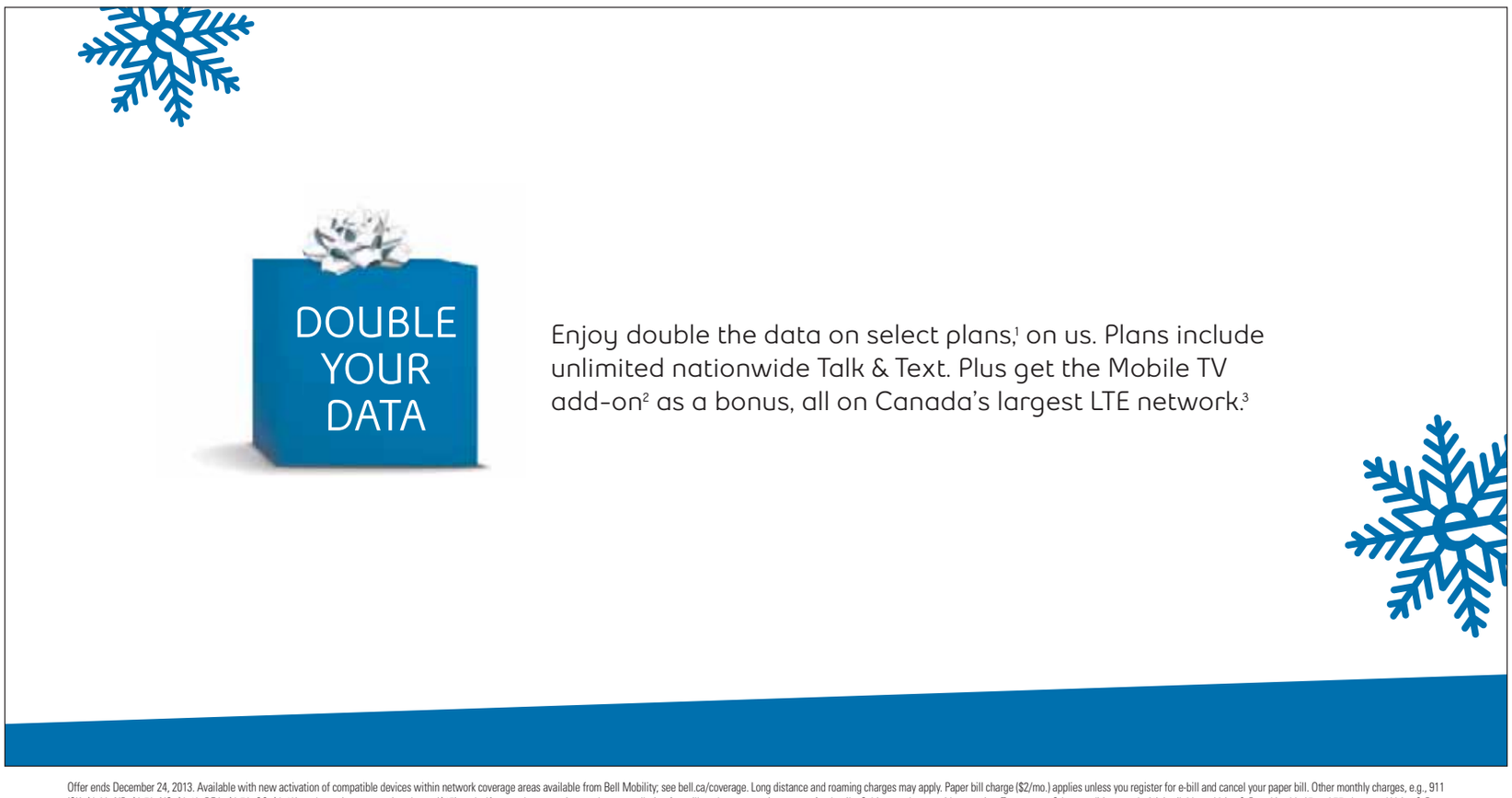
The agency's latest rejection raises serious questions for more than a half-dozen companies working to develop therapies for women who report stress due to lack of libido. It's a market drug makers have been trying to tap since the blockbuster success of Viagra, an erectile-dysfunction drug.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"A pill just doesn't take care of it."

Dr. Virginia Sadock, psychiatrist, on the difficulties of treating female sexual dysfunction.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Craig Kielburger leaves condolences for Nelson Mandela in South Africa. COURTESY MICHAEL RAJZMAN

CRAIG KIELBURGER

As the world mourns Nelson Mandela, one of Canada's pre-eminent youth leaders, and co-founder of Free The Children, spoke with Metro Tuesday from Johannesburg after attending Mandela's memorial.

"A SENSE OF JUST PROFOUND GRATITUDE."

Let's start with your response to the massive memorial service you attended for Nelson Mandela.
The emotions that are running through me — I'd say one is gratitude for the role that he played as one of the great leaders in our world for human rights … but also, I have a sense of responsibility and I hope everyone does feel a sense of responsibility, that the world was fortunate to see someone like Mandela and now the question is, what will we do to live that legacy … I'd say it's very much a sense of just profound gratitude.

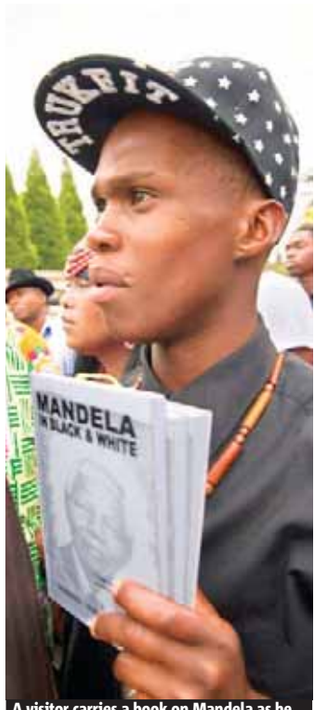
How has Nelson Mandela helped shape Free The Children?
I had the pleasure to hear him speak in various capacities … and once, very briefly meeting him, as did my brother — to ask him a question about his leadership philosophy … he reflected on how he was as a young person, a shepherd or herder, and he learned a lesson that forever stayed with him … that you always had to stand in the back to make sure your sheep, or your goats, always got to where they were supposed to go — that they didn't wander off to the side … that simple idea, the lessons that he taught — the humanity — is an amazing influence.

What was Mandela's impact on you?
Inspiring, I don't think there's any other word that one can use … inspiring in what he represented, inspiring in how he carried himself, inspiring in his words — but mostly inspiring in his dreams … That to lead, you must walk from behind and I think that speaks to the essence of who he was. A leader through-and-through, but someone who was so dedicated to making sure the most vulnerable always arrived.

How important is it that leaders are encouraging the world to model themselves after Mandela?
I hope that more world leaders would model themselves on Mandela. I think it's very easy to quote him, it's very difficult to model him … if world leaders want to honour Mandela … they can increase their foreign-aid commitments, they can promote service and volunteerism in their country, they can show that same compassion and forgiveness with some of the great intractable conflicts of our world — that would be a great way to honour Mandela.

What legacy do you think Mandela will leave behind?
I think legacy isn't something that he writes. In his time on this earth, he inspired us with his courage and his humanity and his willingness to forgive and his legacy will, ironically, be something we write … the legacy is in our hands and I think we have an opportunity that we should not waste.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO IN SASKATOON



A visitor carries a book on Mandela as he stands with gatherers outside Mandela's house. COURTESY MICHAEL RAJZMAN

Dispatches from South Africa by Craig Kielburger

1 Arrival. With a heavy heart

On Wednesday, I walked into the courtyard of the Union Buildings in Pretoria where, in 1994, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the first democratically elected president of South Africa. I headed up a flight of stairs and stopped. It felt as though there was pressure on my chest, heaviness in my heart. I took a deep breath. I expected to see a closed casket and hadn't prepared to see his body. People are lining up for up to seven hours to pay their respects. Of course.

2 Tribute. A sense of gratitude

I'm struck how a nation can come together for such an overwhelming tribute to Mandela, patriarch of this lush country once fractured by racism and hatred. These tributes extend beyond borders. I can't imagine another living person today, or in my lifetime, that could have such a unifying effect. Standing waist-deep in flowers left outside Mandela's house, sharing stories with his friends at a service, standing with South Africans to visit, I feel gratitude.

3 Pride. A never-dying spirit

"For the spirit of Nelson Mandela, it was the right time for him to go because he had done everything humanly possible to change this country. His was a never-dying spirit that showed us anybody can become anything." — Sammy Ntimanem, 34, in the Union Buildings in Pretoria

4 Hope. More than just a moment

"We have been friends and co-workers for eight years. We are very patriotic and support every event we can, from political, to sports, to moments like this. But this is more than just a moment. We came to the square to give tribute to the greatest man on Earth," said Esther Rubin, with Lilahloane Mokale in Nelson Mandela Square, Johannesburg. Added Mokale: "We love him so very much … What we have is because of him. I hope we can go on without him."

5 Remember. For the next generation

"I so want my daughter to remember this day. That's why I have her here. As she grows up I will keep telling her stories about apartheid and how it was before in this country." — Monica Ntimana, 29, with Grace, five months

Work continues

100

At Free the Children, we are adding our voice to the tributes to Mandela. Our organization, along with Canadian schoolchildren, is building 100 schools in Africa. Mandela once said: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

PHOTOS COURTESY MICHAEL RAJZMAN

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Pilot worried over landing Boeing 777, crash report says

Training queried.
Captain admits he had not studied autoflight system well enough

Wreckage of the Asiana Flight 214 airplane that crashed in July at San Francisco's international airport.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

The pilot whose Boeing 777 crashed last summer at the San Francisco airport told investigators he was "very concerned" about attempting a visual approach without the runway's instrument landing aids, which were out of service because of construction, according to an investigative report released Wednesday.

Lee Kang Kuk, a 46-year-old pilot, was landing the big jet for his first time at San Francisco. The jet crash-landed after approaching too low and slow in an accident that killed three people and injured more than 200, according to the National Transportation Safety Board.

Though Lee was an experienced pilot with the Korea-based airline, he was a trainee captain in the 777, with less than 45 hours in the jet. He had not piloted an airliner into San Francisco since 2004, according to NTSB investigator Bill English.

So far, the investigation has not found any mechanical problems with the 777 prior to impact, although testing is ongoing, English said.

Lee told investigators that he realized others had been safely landing at San Francisco without the glide-slope indicator, an array of antennas that transmits a signal into the cockpit to guide the descent, "so he could not say he could not do the visual approach."

Lee conceded he thought that the plane's autothrottle was supposed to prevent the jet from flying below minimum speed as it drew near the runway. But two other Asiana pilots who took an instruction class with Lee said that they were told that the throttle hold did not automatically re-engage under certain autopilot modes.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Torch bridges gap in Siberia

Olympic torch bearer Radomir Proshchenko climbs up to a bridge across the Tura River during the Olympic torch relay in Tyumen, western Siberia, Russia, Wednesday. The 65,000-kilometre Sochi torch relay, which started on Oct. 7, is the longest in Olympic history.
COURTESY OLYMPICTORCH2014.COM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Frankfurt, Germany

Anne Frank tree stolen from school

Police say a sapling cloned from the tree that lifted Anne Frank's spirits while she hid from the Nazis in Amsterdam has been felled and stolen from outside a school in Frankfurt bearing the name of the Jewish teenage diarist.

The 2.5-metre tree was felled over the weekend in the grounds of the Anne Frank School.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hitler's Mein Kampf

Bavaria struggles to block book

Bavaria's state government says it will try to keep Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf out of publication in Germany after the copyright expires in 2015.

Hitler's anti-Semitic memoir isn't actually banned in Germany, but Bavaria has used its ownership of the copyright to block publication.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Usage-based insurance in Canada?
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Missing heart. Marine's parents seeking damages after accidental discovery

The parents of a U.S. Marine whose body came back from Greece missing his heart have amended their federal lawsuit to add the Greek government and an Athens hospital as defendants.

Craig and Beverly LaLoup are also suing the U.S. Department of Defence over the remains of 21-year-old Sgt. Brian LaLoup. The Defence Department doesn't comment on pending litigation. Messages were left with the Greek government and state-run Evangelismos General Hospital.

LaLoup, who was assigned to a security detail at the embassy, had told a colleague he was suicidal over a breakup. The parents believe a Marine supervisor knew about his mindset but instead of getting help, took him out for drinks.

Their lawsuit alleges their son was allowed to get a weapon from a storage area later that night, despite his mood and level of intoxication, and shot himself. The U.S. government is generally immune from wrongful death lawsuits, so the family is seeking damages only over their emotional distress caused by the missing heart.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Surrendered

Defection setback for Uganda's LRA

The Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony has suffered its biggest defection in years after 19 members surrendered to an advocacy group and African Union troops hunting the insurgents in the Central African Republic, the advocacy group said. Invisible Children said in a statement the LRA members gave themselves up on Dec. 6.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Frustrated Chinese citizens drink pesticide in protest

Homes demolished. Residents say they'd had enough after years of fruitless petitioning

A dozen residents of a central Chinese city protested the demolition of their homes by drinking pesticide in Beijing in a desperate bid for attention that underscores the failures of a decades-old petitioning system.

The 12 survived the protest Tuesday near a historic watchtower in the heart of China's capital after police sent them to a hospital, where they were being treated Wednesday for poisoning, said Wang Yuping, one of the residents.

Chinese petitioners sometimes are driven to extreme measures as their frustration boils over after years of unresolved grievances and routine beatings by local authorities.

Chinese residents from Wuhan province lie on the ground after drinking pesticide near a historic watchtower in the heart of Beijing, China. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wang, 40, and the others had travelled to Beijing from a district in Wuhan, the provincial capital of Hubei province, to draw attention to their complaints.

Wang described the protest as a group suicide attempt.

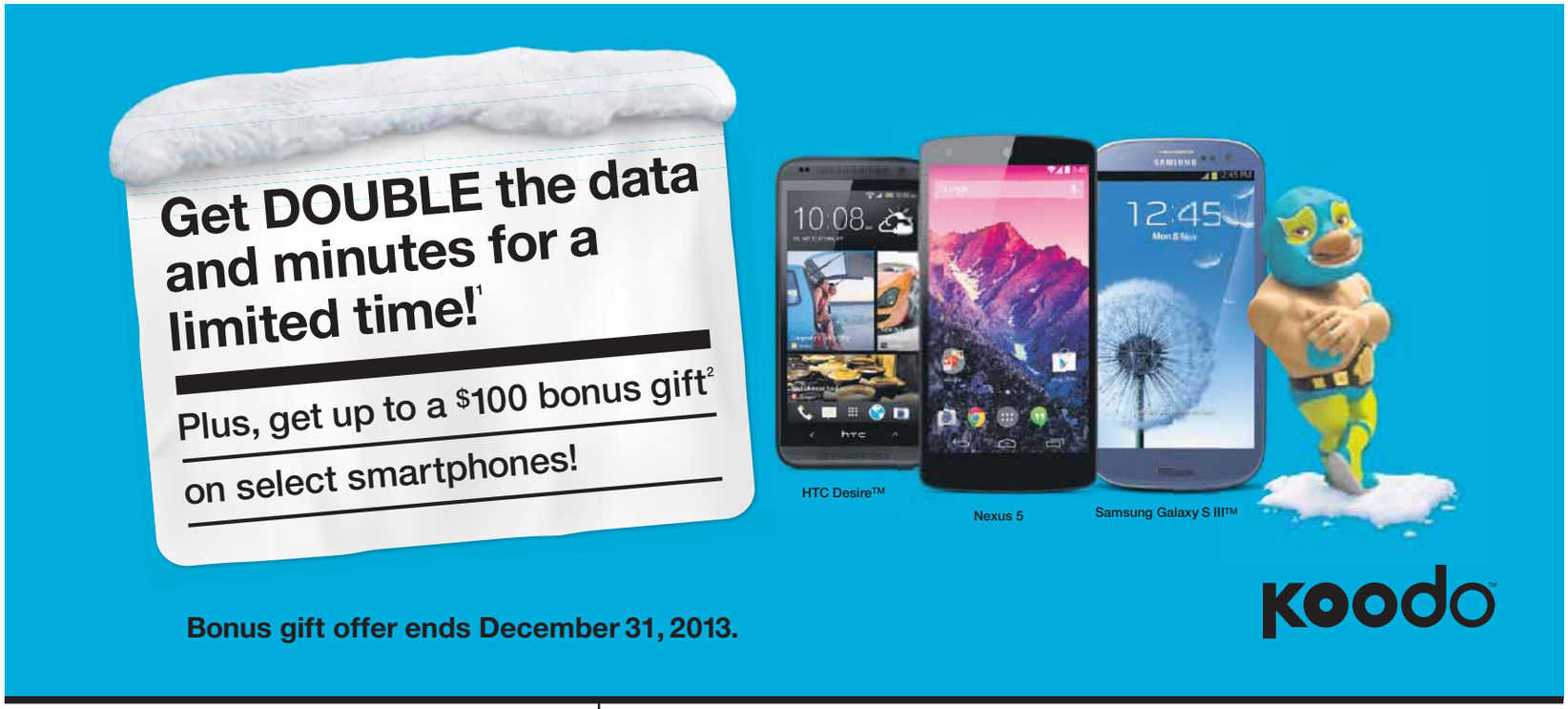
"We have been petitioning for so many years, but either we have been dragged back home or locked in secret jails and beaten, and no one has been willing to help us," Wang said by telephone. "We felt like there was no hope left."

Each petitioner drank about 50 millilitres of pesticide, Wang said, then lay down on the ground until police bundled them into vehicles and drove them to a hospital.

Wang said the petitioners have been unsuccessfully seeking redress since 2010 for the razing of their homes by local authorities who provided little or no compensation.

Local government and police offices in Wuhan could not be reached by phone. Every year in China, millions of complaints are filed about what petitioners see as injustice or incompetence by local officials. The system is criticized as ineffective and being prone to abuse. Petitioners are often met with violence when they attempt to take their cases to Beijing, with local governments sending "interceptors" to stop them — with force — and keep them in informal "black jails" until they can be sent home.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS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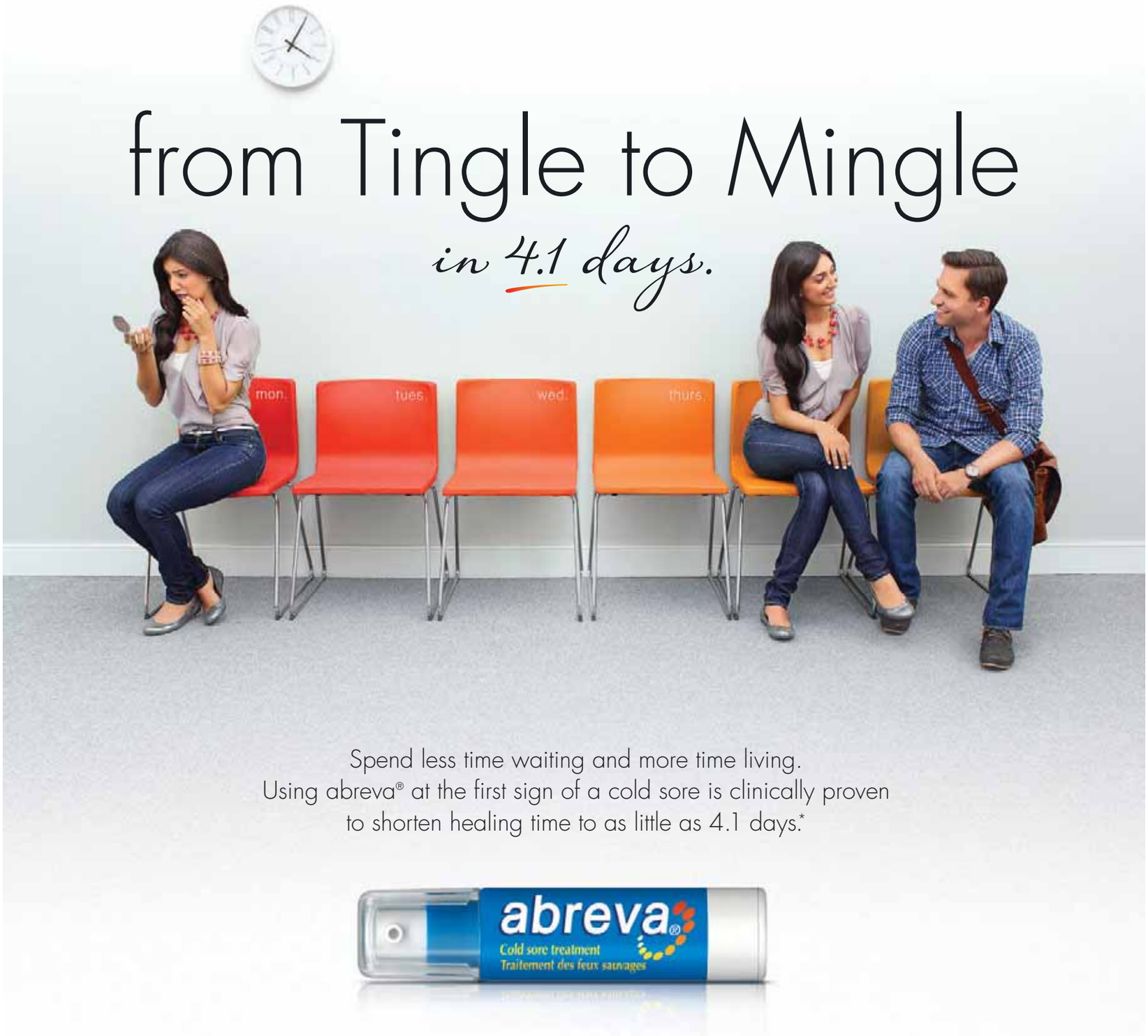
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Trapped underwater, Nigerian cook recounts miraculous rescue

Presumed dead. Man clings to life inside air pocket of capsized boat for three days

Harrison Odjegba Okene, second left, poses with members of the DCN Diving team who saved his life after he was trapped for three days under water. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

He had survived three days in an upside-down tugboat at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean and then he saw lights in the water. Air bubbles rose around the cook as he squatted in an air pocket. A diver was coming. Rescue seemed imminent for Harrison Odjegba Okene.

But then the lights disappeared. Desperate, Okene swam through pitch-dark waters in the sunken boat to grab the diver. Okene couldn't find him and, with the air in his lungs giving out, he swam back to the cabin that held his precious, but dwindling, pocket of air.

Okene described the ordeal and his miraculous rescue that was videotaped and which went viral after it was put on the Internet this month.

The 29-year-old still has nightmares and vows to never return to the sea again.

Okene was the only survivor in a crew of 12 when the boat capsized in May. It still haunts him. In addition with being saddled with survivors' guilt, some Nigerians believe he saved himself through black magic.

The Jascon 4 was resting on the seabed upside down at a depth of about 100 feet (30 metres).

The chubby cook survived on only one bottle of Coke. Two flashlights that he had found gave up after less than one day. In the dark, he had almost given up hope after three days when he suddenly heard the sound of a boat, a hammering on the side of the vessel.

He said he knew it had to be a diver, but he was on the wrong end of the cabin.

His rescuers from the Dutch company DCN Diving were looking only for bodies and already had recovered four corpses when they came upon Okene.

When the diver returned, Okene had to swim again to reach him and still he did not see him. "So I tapped him at the back of his neck, so he was afraid." When the diver saw his hand he said "corpse, corpse, a corpse," into his microphone, reporting up to the rescue vessel.

"When he brought his hand close to me, I pulled on his hand," Okene said. "He's alive! He's alive! He's alive!" Okene remembers hearing.

Okene described a surreal scene after the diver emerged into the air pocket. Once saved from the sunken boat, he was put into a decompression chamber for 60 hours before he could safely return to the surface.

Until his rescue, Okene believed his colleagues must have escaped. The tug was one of three towing a Chevron oil tanker in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta waters, but on May 26 there was a sudden lurch and it keeled over. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nightmare at sea

"Things started falling and my colleagues were shouting 'God help me.'"

Harrison Odjegba Okene reccounts his experiences during the sinking of the Jascon 4

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A boy stands outside his tent in a heavy snowstorm at a camp for Syrians who fled their country's civil war, in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, Wednesday. The United Nations refugee agency says it is "extremely concerned" for hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees scattered across the region amid a snowstorm with high winds and torrential rains.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Agencies scramble to shelter refugees from winter storm

Crisis. At least 80,000 Syrians in Lebanon will spend the winter in tents, UN refugee official says

A blustery storm dropped torrential rain and snow on Lebanon and Jordan on Wednesday, forcing aid agencies to scramble to distribute desperately needed winter supplies like blankets and plastic tarps to Syrian refugees.

The storm pushed temperatures below freezing in northern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, which is dotted with informal refugee settlements. The winter weather heaped another layer of misery on the already grim existence of many of the estimated 1.4 million Syrians in Lebanon who fled the civil war in their homeland.

"We are extremely concerned for the refugees this winter that promises to be very harsh," Dana Sleiman of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said.

More than two million Syrians — at least half of them children — have fled to neighbouring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. Many will spend the winter in flimsy tents with often only a plastic sheet covering the ground.

With dwindling international support to help Syria's neighbours cover the costs and burden of providing for influx, many of the refugees now worry about how they are going to survive the winter. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In shelters so forlorn ...

Unlike in Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, the Lebanese government is not providing facilities or land to temporarily accommodate refugees.

- Many Syrians in Lebanon have found shelter in slums, tents and tin shacks strung with laundry lines and wedged between farmland outside towns and cities.
- In the capital, Beirut, many Syrians live in underground parking lots, under bridges and on old construction sites with no running water, sanitation, or protection from the weather.

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Survey. Today's teens more likely to drive while stoned than drunk

More Ontario high school students report driving after using marijuana than after having a few drinks, according to a province-wide study tracking substance use among students.

One in 10 drivers in Grades 10 to 12 reported getting behind the wheel within an hour of using marijuana at least once during the past year, the latest Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey says.

That's compared with four per cent who reported doing so after having two or more drinks of alcohol, the data released Wednesday show.

More than 10,000 Ontario students in Grades 7 through 12 from close to 200 schools participated in this year's study. They answered anonymous questionnaires between November of last year and March.

The survey, administered by York University's Institute for Social Research for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, has been conducted every two years since 1977.

It found that in recent years, only the percentage of students reporting they get high on over-the-counter cough and cold medication has increased significantly.

Just shy of one in 10 students — 9.7 per cent — reported abusing cold medication in the past year in 2013, up from 7.2 per cent in 2009, the study says.

Meanwhile, students' reported use of 13 other substances — including alcohol, cigarettes, cocaine and methamphetamine — has dropped significantly between 1999 and this year, it says. Students in Grades 9 through 12 also reported less non-medical use of prescription drugs: 15.2 per cent this year from 23.5 in 2007.

And more students reported abstaining from drugs, alcohol and tobacco altogether in the past year than they did in 1999 — 37 per cent, up from 27 per cent. "Alcohol use has been declining gradually since about 1999," the study reads.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Saudi Arabia. Women caught breaking driving ban detained by police

Saudi activists say police have detained two women in Riyadh caught breaking an official ban on females driving.

The activists say the women were stopped Wednesday afternoon and taken to a local police station where their male relatives were also called in.

Saudi activists launched a campaign starting last September renewing calls to allow women the right to drive in the conservative kingdom.

In recent situations where women were caught driving, their male relatives were asked to sign statements saying they would not allow the women to drive again.

The activists, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern for their security, say Wednesday's detentions are unique because the women have been detained hours longer than usual without being released.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former Montreal mayor

Applebaum fraud case put off until late January

A fraud case against Montreal's former mayor has been put off until late January because the Crown has more evidence to disclose. Prosecutor Marie-Hélène Giroux requested a delay in the proceedings Wednesday against various people, including ex-mayor Michael Applebaum.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Oilsands

Environmental group reapplies to speak to panel

A group has reapplied to speak to an oilsands review panel after a court tossed out the Alberta government's attempt to block the organization. The Alberta Oilsands Environmental Coalition is asking to appear at a hearing into a project proposed by Southern Pacific Resource Corp.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau takes part in an interview on Parliament Hill on Tuesday. SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Trudeau vows to keep it real

'Trusting Canadians.' Grit leader thinks Canadians will forgive him the occasional foot-in-mouth moment because he's genuine

Quoted

"I think Canadians are tired of politicians that are spun and scripted within an inch of their life."

Justin Trudeau, Leader of the federal Liberal Party

Justin Trudeau says he's not about to curtail his unscripted approach to politics in a bid to avoid making gaffes.

And he thinks Canadians will forgive him the occasional foot in the mouth because they'd rather have a genuine politician who makes mistakes than someone who never errs by robotically reciting carefully crafted talking points.

"I'm reassured that, yes, even though every now and then I give a little extra fodder to my opponents to try and go after me, ultimately I'm right in trusting Canadians that they will understand that my focus is entirely on trying to serve them in the best and the realest way that I possibly can," the Liberal leader told The Canadian Press in a year-end interview.

Since taking the helm of the battered Liberal party in April, Trudeau has made his share of gaffes. Most recently, he dismayed his supporters and delighted his political adversaries by appearing to express admiration for China's Communist dictatorship while giving a rambling and convoluted response to a question at a fundraiser for female candidates.

But so far at least, Canadians appear willing to make allowances for the rookie leader with the famous pedigree. After being reduce to a third-party rump in 2011, the Liberals have rebounded in the polls since Trudeau took over.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

N.S. to boost number of psychiatrists for teens

The Nova Scotia government vowed to boost the number of psychiatrists who treat adolescents after a report highlighted deficiencies in the mental health care of young people who are seeking help at increasing rates.

Health Minister Leo Glavine said Wednesday that he would look to recruit more professionals who treat youth with mental health problems, challenging a different report that called for a reduction in adolescent psychiatrists.

"We will need to bolster the number of clinicians to meet these recommendations," Glavine said after the release of the review, which was launched following the death of 17-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons.

Jana Davidson was appointed to lead the review after an earlier report into Rehtaeh's case raised concerns about the IWK Health Centre.

Davidson found several weaknesses in the system, ranging from a lack of mental health physicians, disjointed care from different departments and poor physical health care for 17- to 19-year-olds.

In particular, she said older teens who suffer from physical or sexual assault and mental health issues are moved between the adult health authority and the children's hospital. The report recommends integrating all health care for children and youth up to age 19.

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Ukraine opposition shuns offer of talks

Act before chat.
Withdrawal of riot police interpreted as sign that support for president is dwindling

Opposition leaders in Ukraine rejected President Viktor Yanukovych's offer of talks Wednesday, saying they will not sit down with him until he fires his government and releases all arrested demonstrators.

That stance reflected their growing confidence after the abrupt withdrawal of riot police from parts of Ukraine's capital early Wednesday raised protesters' hopes that weeks of demonstrations have eroded police support for Yanukovych and his government.

Yanukovych issued an invitation late in the day to political, religious and civil figures to join a national dialogue. But it gave no details about a proposed date for the talks — and could have been merely an attempt to buy time and mollify Western officials.

The opposition reaction was scathing.

"Instead of a round table, what we got is a breakup (with) truncheons. The authorities are driving into a dead end," opposition leader Oleksandr Turchynov said.

Yuri Lutsenko, a former interior minister who is now another opposition leader, said the police retreat shows that "basically only some units remain" loyal to Yanukovych.

"This is a great victory," Arseniy Yatsenyuk, leader of the largest opposition party in parliament, said of the police withdrawal.

He spoke from the stage at Kyiv's central Independence Square, where protesters have set up an extensive protest tent camp manned around the clock.

Western diplomats have increased their pressure on Yanukovych to seek a solution to the tensions that have paralyzed this economically troubled nation of 46 million.

In response, Prime Minister Mykola Azarov and other officials promised Wednesday that police would not act against peaceful protesters.

"I want to calm everyone down — there will be no dispersal of protesters," Interior Minister Vitaly Zakharchenko said in a statement, which did not explain why thousands of helmeted and shield-bearing police were deployed in the first place.

Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Victoria Nuland met with Yanukovych Wednesday after visiting the protest camp.

"I made it absolutely clear that what happened last night, what is happening in security terms here, is absolutely impermissible in a European state, a democratic state," she said, referring to police scuffles with protesters. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Not ready to make nice

"Instead of a round table, what we got is a breakup (with) truncheons. The authorities are driving into a dead end."
Oleksandr Turchynov
Opposition leader

Pro-European Union activists wave flags as riot p

Elements of instability

Recent discord denotes a country divided

Yanukovych's shelving in November of an agreement with the European Union to deepen economic and political ties has set off weeks of protests.

Supporters of the EU pact — including many in Kyiv, the capital — want Ukraine to become closer to Western Europe and distance itself from Russia, which ruled or dominated Ukraine for centuries.

Russia has worked hard to derail the accord, issuing a variety of trade threats, and Ukrainians in the east look more favourably on aligning closer with Russia.

Yanukovych, who is seeking a bailout loan from the International Monetary Fund to keep Ukraine from going bankrupt, is sensitive to the economic disruption that trade disputes with Russia can cause.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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olice pull back from Independence Square in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday. SERGEI GRITS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Overnight uproar. Police move on demonstrators

The flurry of police action in Kyiv began about 1 a.m., when phalanxes approached Independence Square from several directions, tearing down some tents and barricades and scuffling with some protesters. Many protesters, wearing orange construction hats to protect themselves from police truncheons, locked arms against the police and some scuffles broke out.

Separately, three buses of riot police parked on the steps of the city administration building, about 300 metres away from the square. Protesters poured water on the steps, which quickly froze, and grappled with police.

The police returned to the buses and pulled away hours later, as protesters shouted "Shame!" and "Way to go!" The larger police contingent at the square also left and by Wednesday afternoon, new tents and barricades were being put up. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Ukrainian woman, a pro-European Union activist, sits during the protest in Independence Square, on Wednesday.
SERGEI CHUZAVKOV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Facts of the fight

- The protests are the biggest since Ukraine's pro-democracy Orange Revolution in 2004, which forced the annulment of Yanukovych's presidential victory in a fraud-tainted election and ushered his pro-Western opponents into power.
- Yanukovych won back the presidency in the 2010 vote, narrowly defeating Yulia Tymoshenko, a key Orange Revolution figure. Tymoshenko was then imprisoned on charges of abuse of office, a case widely criticized in the West as political revenge.
- In Washington, the State Department said it is evaluating all options, including possible U.S. sanctions against Ukraine. It didn't provide details, but in the past the U.S. has imposed asset freezes and travel bans on senior officials in oppressive governments.

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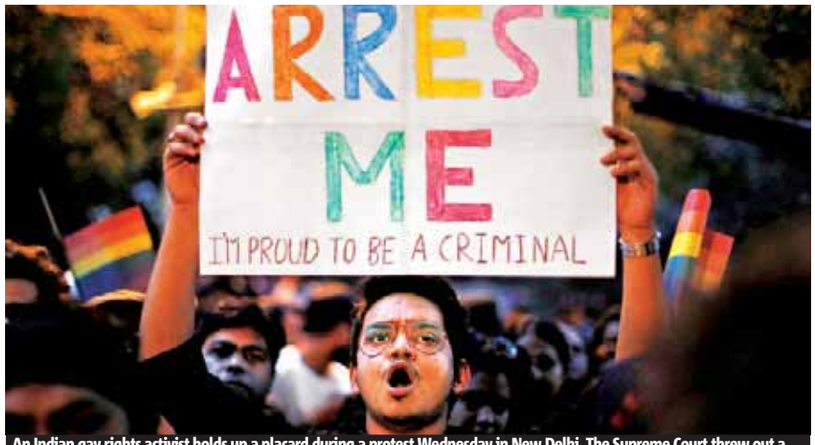

An Indian gay rights activist holds up a placard during a protest Wednesday in New Delhi. The Supreme Court threw out a 2009 High Court decision to decriminalize homosexuality, dealing a blow to gay activists who have argued for years for the chance to live openly in India's deeply conservative society. ALTAF QADRI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

India's top court says that being gay is criminal

1860s law. Country among 70 others that criminalize homosexual conduct, according to human rights groups

India's Supreme Court struck down a 2009 lower court decision to decriminalize homosexual conduct, dealing a blow Wednesday to gay activists who have fought for years for the chance to live openly in India's deeply conservative society.

The judges said only lawmakers and not the courts could change a colonial-era law that bans homosexual acts and makes them punishable by up to a decade in prison.

Encourages 'discrimination'

"We cannot be forced back into the closet. We are not backing off from our fight against discrimination."

Gautam Bhan, an activist who had petitioned the court

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community across India reacted to the surprise decision with defiance.

After the ruling, dozens of activists outside the court began crying and hugging each other in consolation.

"This is a very sad day for us, we are back to square one in our fight for the democratic rights of the gay community," said Ashok Row Kavi of the activist group Humsafar Trust.

Lawyers and supporters of gays, lesbians and transsexuals vowed to continue pressing for the removal of the law, which they say encourages discrimination, even if it is rarely invoked by prosecutors.

"We feel very let down," said lawyer Anand Grover, who had argued the case on behalf of the advocacy group NAZ Foundation. "But our fight is not over and we will continue to fight for the constitutional right."

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Ottawa

Man faces human trafficking charges

Police in Ottawa say a 31-year-old man is facing six charges related to human trafficking and prostitution.

Police say the charges came after officers responded Monday to a complaint of suspicious activity at a home (on Greenview Avenue).

Zhao Liu of Ottawa faces charges that include human trafficking, living on the avails of prostitution, and keeping a common bawdy house.

Police say the alleged victims were over 18 years old. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Meteor shower ramps up

A meteor streaks across the sky during the annual Geminid meteor shower over Springville, Ala., in this Dec. 13, 2012 file photo. This year the meteor shower — the most intense of the year — will peak Friday night. But the best viewing may be early Saturday, once the moon sets. MARK ALMOND, AL.COM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Census resister sticks to her guns

Janet Churnin, left, stands outside a Toronto courthouse with Audrey Tobias on Wednesday. Both women refused to fill out the mandatory census in 2011 and were taken to trial. DIANA MEHTA/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Data collection. Senior says she's not opposed to the census but doesn't want a U.S. company involved

A 79-year-old woman on trial for refusing to fill out the mandatory census in 2011 stood staunchly by her decision Wednesday, as her lawyer suggested the government didn't do enough to address her concerns about a U.S. arms maker's role in the data collection process.

The Crown, however, argued that Canadians cannot refuse to comply with legitimate government obligations simply on the basis of moral disapproval or speculative security fears.

Janet Churnin has been charged with violating the Statistics Act and, if convicted, could face a $500 fine and/or three months in jail.

"Whatever happens will happen," the soft-spoken senior said with a shrug outside a Toronto court. "I still wouldn't change anything."

At the heart of Churnin's worries lies defence company Lockheed Martin's involvement in the census process, which she learned about only after reading a newspaper article flagged by a friend.

Statistics Canada has said the government contracted Lockheed Martin to provide software for its census operations in 2003, and used the custom-built systems for both the 2006 and 2011 census.

Churnin worried information on Canada's population was at risk because she thought it could be accessed by Lockheed Martin, or even the U.S. government if it made the corporation turn over the data under its Patriot Act.

"Your privacy is not considered at all," she told court when explaining her decision to refrain from filling out the census form.

Churnin's case is similar to that of an 89-year-old peace activist who also refused to fill out the 2011 census.

In that case, Audrey Tobias was found not guilty in October by a Toronto judge who soundly criticized the government for trying to prosecute someone who was a "model citizen." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Pope named person of 2013

Time magazine selected Pope Francis as its Person of the Year on Wednesday, saying the Catholic Church's new leader has changed the perception of the 2,000-year-old institution in an extraordinary way in a short time. The Pope beat out NSA leaker Edward Snowden for the distinction, which the news magazine has been giving each year since 1927. The Pope has denounced the world's "idolatry of money" and the "global scandal" that nearly 1 billion people today go hungry, and has charmed the masses with his simple style and wry sense of humour. His appearances draw tens of thousands of people and his @Pontifex Twitter account recently topped 10 million followers. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Xbox One. Over 83 million hours wasted since launch

Microsoft says more than 2 million of its Xbox One consoles have been sold since the system's launch 19 days ago.

Company officials say users have spent over 83 million hours with the games, TV, and apps on Xbox One since the Nov. 22 launch.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Microsoft says an average of 111,111 units have been sold per day since the launch. GETTY IMAGES FOR MICROSOFT

Not an effective strategy

On LinkedIn? Nix 'responsible' from your profile

In this case, being responsible is overrated.

It's the No. 1 most overused buzzword on LinkedIn profiles in Canada, and globally, in 2013.

Professional networking site LinkedIn said its annual study also puts "strategic," "effective" and "creative" on this year's Top 10 list of overused words on business profiles. THE CANADIAN PRESS

$1.6 million US

Four arrested in bank cyberthefts

Four people have been arrested by detectives investigating the suspected theft of 1 million pounds ($1.6 million US) from two U.K. banks via downloaded malware, police in London said Wednesday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 94.40¢ (+ 0.09¢)

TSX 13,133.42 (- 190.59)

OIL $97.44 US (+ $1.07)

GOLD $1,257.20 (- $3.90)

Natural gas: $4.34 US (+ 0.09)
Dow Jones: 15,843.53 (- 129.60)

A man shows the Sony Xperia Z1 smartphone at an event in Berlin in September. A hybrid device that's part tablet and part smartphone called a 'phablet' is expected to outsell tablets and gaming consoles in 2014. THE CANADIAN PRESS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

2014 to be year of the 'phablet'

Chatting on your phone is so 2013. As users opt to watch video and play games, the part tablet and part smartphone is set to dominate

An oversized smartphone that could appeal to consumers who do less talking and more video watching is expected to outsell tablets and gaming consoles worldwide in 2014.

The so-called "phablet" — part tablet and part smartphone with an average screen size of five inches — will represent one quarter of all smartphones sales next year, Deloitte Canada predicts.

"People are either talking less and willing to buy bigger phones, or they buy bigger phones and start talking less," said Deloitte analyst Duncan Stewart, who compiles an annual list of tech trends.

Stewart said that smartphone users don't watch a lot of video or play higher-end games because of the smaller screen, but they tend to change their habits once they have a bigger screen. That's the appeal of the phablet, he said.

"All of a sudden the video experience is transformed, the gaming experience is transformed," he said from Toronto.

Some examples of phablets include the Samsung Galaxy Note 3 and Sony's Xperia Z Ultra.

World domination

300M

Deloitte Canada predicts 300 million phablets will be sold globally in 2014, bringing in around $125 billion and taking up about 25 per cent of smartphones sold.

Apple's iPhone 5 now offers consumers a four-inch screen, while a number of smartphones have smaller, 3.5-inch screen displays.

As part of its 2014 tech predictions, Deloitte Canada said 300 million phablets will be sold globally in 2014 at an average price of $415 for total sales approaching $125 billion.

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IT'S CHILLY — NOT THE TASTY TYPE

HE SAYS
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Lo and be cold, it's that time of year again in Canada.

When I watch the morning forecast, some of the temperatures are best measured in Kelvin: "It will be Absolute Zero in Regina, but with the wind chill it will feel like we've passed beyond our understanding of thermodynamics, so bundle up!"

As I walk to work, my palm burns from my morning coffee but the back of my hand freezes from the coffee dripping. (In all things, moderation.)

And at work, I waste my time with YouTube videos illustrating that household pets, if tossed into the frigid air, will disintegrate into snow before they hit the ground.

N-n-n-not to put too f-f-f-fine a point on it, but it's c-c-c-cold.

It's all relative, of course — an Edmontonian accustomed to -25 C might hallucinate in the balmy -8 C of Toronto and imagine oases in the distance, frozen solid and covered in sexy skaters. Yet a friend of mine who's moved to Toronto from Vancouver was lost when she was told T.O. gets "twice as cold" as it is now.

"I don't even know what that means," she said, like somebody who'd been told they'll be murdered on Tuesday and again on Thursday.

My point being, it's best we set aside our regional differences and accept that the whole nation is a frigid wasteland — No Country for Cold Men.

Beer commercials to the contrary, most Canadian adults cower inside all winter. And when youth do go outside it results in all matter of deformities: Swollen ears and tongues stuck to metal and faces frozen solid. I once froze up so badly while waiting for a school bus that even when laughing I couldn't smile, leaving all my classmates in hysterics and providing an early cautionary tale about the dangers of Botox.

With these extreme dangers frozen in our minds, here are seven tips for any extreme-cold emergencies this winter:

1) Your home and car should have an emergency kit that includes: Warm water; Super Inferno Cinnamon Gum; one pack of erotic playing cards; a watch that runs on the cold; marshmallows; a magic hat for snowman sentience creation; plane tickets to some place warmer.

2) When lighting that furniture-fuelled bonfire in your living room, only use clean-burning natural gas.

3) Leaving your car running all winter will make those morning commutes comfy while speeding up global warming.

4) Soak wool in warm water before heading out.

5) To keep your kids warm, put all of them in the same adult-sized snowsuit and have them walk in tandem, imitating a full-sized person. Cartoon capering is also great exercise.

6) Remember to swing open your door every 10 minutes or so to see if it's gotten any warmer outside.

7) Find out what Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi's doing. He's got this.

And those are my tips. Careful you don't freeze them right off. A friendly reminder: While I've made light of the chill, hypothermia and frostbite are no laughing matter. Or maybe they are. It's so hard to tell with our faces frozen like this.

ZOOM

War, from a kid's perspective

COURTESY BRIAN MCCARTY

Photographer captures a feeling

This shot of toy missiles heading for a doll's house isn't meant for playtime — it's how a child sees war. The striking image by Hollywood photographer Brian McCarty features in his War-Toys project, which explores how conflict is perceived through the eyes of kids caught up in war and violence across the Middle East. METRO

Q and A

Toys make sense of it all

BRIAN MCCARTY
Photographer/artist, 39, based in West Hollywood, Calif.

What's your project about?
Starting back in 2011, I travelled to Israel and the Palestinian Territories to explore war from the perspective of children. I visited humanitarian organizations where children were invited to draw pictures about their lives. The resulting illustrations served as the basis for my photographs.

Why did you use toys?
As children, toys became surrogates through which we acted out aspects of the world around us. Our play allowed us to organically deconstruct what it meant to be human and digest large concepts in smaller bites. War is so dehumanizing and outside normal reality that, even as adults, we need toys to make sense of it. We need the distance provided by these plastic totems to begin seeing the actual horrors without being made numb.

Clickbait

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro Online

CONTRIBUTED

The digital equivalent of a rotoscope, animated GIFs are one of the oldest image formats used on the web. Invented in the 1980s, the humble GIF has since become a staple of online culture. Easy to make and even easier to share, they're the perfect platform for everything from humour to art. Most image-editing programs can make GIFs, but here are a few apps that simplify the process. Happy GIFing! Just don't get me started on how it's pronounced.

GifBoom:
Available on both Android and iOS, GifBoom is considered the Instagram of mobile GIF-making apps. The social features are largely optional, but the built-in GIF-maker is intuitive and lets you do things like add filters or sound.

Cinemagram:
Another cross-platform smartphone app, Cinemagram veers towards creating GIFs out of video footage. The app's appeal lies in its masking function, which allows you to select which parts of a frame are animated.

ImgFlip:
If you want to be old fashioned and make GIFs in your web browser, ImgFlip is one of the more full-featured sites. It lets you build GIFs out of either video or pictures, and includes a decent suite of editing tools.

Twitter

@metropicks asked: The home mailbox will be obsolete as @canadapostcorp ends urban delivery. What's the best way to repurpose a mailbox?

@draxapup: flower pot on every front stoop

@willems_steph: Frozen food delivery receptacle.

@Canucklehead_ca: 1) Print & delete emails. 2) Place is mailbox. 3) Take out & reply (via email) to each. (Will require retyping original email.)

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‘The greatest animator that ever lived’

Studio Ghibli.
Movie house achieves emotional depth in storytelling through cartoons

BACKSTAGE PASS
Ian Gormely
scene@metronews.ca

An image of Howl’s Moving Castle. JOAN MARCUS

Japanese movie house Studio Ghibli is world-renowned for creating deeply emotional films dealing with family, the natural world and the evils of modernity. Its 2001 picture, Spirited Away, even won an Academy Award. But most impressive is the fact that it’s achieved this vaunted status exclusively with cartoons.

“They express awe,” enthuses Jesse Wente, who helped put together a holiday retrospective of the studio’s work for the TIFF Bell Lightbox. “These are emotions that we most often don’t associate with animation.”

Ghibli is regularly compared to Disney with the character Totoro acting as its Mickey Mouse and Hayao Miyazaki its Walt Disney. But Ghibli is actually a partnership between Miyazaki and fellow director Isao Takahata.

John Lasseter, the head of Pixar, is a massive fan and is the primary reason Disney became the studio’s North American distributor.

The last time the Lightbox hosted a collection of Ghibli films, filmmakers David Cronenberg, Atom Egoyan and Guillermo del Toro all showed up at a screening of My Neighbour Totoro.

Besides falling under his purview as head of film programming at the Lightbox, Ghibli’s films are close to Wente’s heart.

“For me, sitting in a movie is a chance to return to childhood,” he says, recalling the first time he saw Star Wars at the University Cinema. “That’s what Ghibli does. They return me to that moment.”

Yet the retrospective also marks the end of an era at Ghibli. Miyazaki has indicated that his latest film, the Wind Rises, which sees wide theatrical release in the new year, will be his last. Wente hopes that retrospectives like this one will help new audiences appreciate his films the way he does.

“He’s the greatest animator that ever lived,” he says. “He’s greater than Disney to me.”

Spirited Away: the Films of Studio Ghibli. December 13 to January 3. TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St. West. tiff.net.

Grave of Fireflies

Critics’ pick

Of all the films in the current Ghibli retrospective, Wente is most excited about Grave of the Fireflies, the studio’s 1988 Second World War drama.

“When I took the job, it’s the movie I most wanted to show.”

The movie came out the same year as My Neighbour Totoro, the studio’s signature film that provided its mascot. Yet this “lesser seen masterpiece” is considered by many to be Ghibli’s crowning achievement. “It changed a lot of critics’ minds not only to Ghibli but to the entire genre of Japanese animation,” says Wente. “It suggested that animation wasn’t an art form completely devoted to children.”

NBC's halls alive with the sound of potential

A one-hit wonder?
The Sound of Music' was a smash last week, but what will NBC do for a musical encore?

NBC's halls are alive with the sound of sequels. After the triumph of last week's The Sound of Music Live! NBC understandably is now planning more live musicals.

This is welcome news for anyone who likes seeing a network get off the beaten path. Few observers have failed to cheer NBC for raw ambition in presenting a live musical more than a half-century after the previous one aired. Attaboys even came from the loudest critics of the broadcast and its leading lady, Carrie Underwood, who played Maria.

"I think we can do this again — and again and again," NBC Entertainment Chairman Robert Greenblatt told The New York Times this week, while allowing, "There may be a little bit of a phenomenon to the first one of these. Who knows what happens Year 2, 3 or 4?"

Who indeed? Can the interest, excitement and nearly 19 million viewers scored by The Sound of Music Live! be matched a year from now by another such TV event? Or was this live show a one-note wonder? The answer might lie in determining why so many viewers tuned in.

Was it Carrie Underwood who served as the big draw?

Was the main attraction The Sound of Music itself, a Rodgers and Hammerstein classic that, largely thanks to its 1965 film version, is one of the most recognized and popular family entertainments in the world?

Or did the audience simply rally to the anything-could-happen unpredictability of live TV, something no viewer had experienced with a musical since Eisenhower was president?

Odds are, all three reasons help explain why The Sound of Music Live! made such a splash. But a year from now, can NBC's follow-up strike a similar chord? What manner of star could equal Underwood's drawing power? And, maybe most important of all, is there any other musical that could grab the attention The Sound of Music automatically claims?

Although NBC isn't saying which musicals may be under consideration, it's easy enough to play a guessing game.

Maybe Peter Pan or The Music Man (though both have been revived as filmed TV productions). Perhaps mega-star Hugh Jackman could reprise his triumphant performance in a TV revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!

What about Mame with Cher? Bette Midler in Hello Dolly? Reba McEntire in The Unsinkable Molly Brown?

But do any of these projects come close to The Sound of Music Live? In short, is there another filmed musical everyone has seen and has such deep feelings for? Of course. It's time for NBC's star-studded staging of The Wizard of Oz Live!

Sign Lea Michele of Glee to play Dorothy, Meryl Streep as the Good Witch, Anne Hathaway as the Wicked Witch. Tina Fey as the Wizard. Neil Patrick Harris as the Scarecrow. Alan Cumming as the Tin Man. Will Ferrell as the Cowardly Lion.

The Wizard of Oz, with Judy Garland as Dorothy, reigns as a piece of pop culture that viewers would be thrilled or outraged — but most important, compelled — to see restaged for live TV. They would watch with bated breath for technical screw-ups (beware that flying house and melting witch!). They would scorch the Twitterverse with comments, flattering and snarky.

Before, during and after it aired, this show and its songs would be on everyone's lips. A year from now, the yellow brick road could prove to be a straight shot to Must-See TV.

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Carrie Underwood, right as Maria, in The Sound of Music Live! AP PHOTO

Following their movie

One Direction reality show may well be ... a reality

One Direction are probably getting their own reality show. Cue the shrieks of teen girls, weird middle-aged women and some teen boys everywhere. The insanely popular British boy band (the rabid tween girl fan frenzy they inspire has not been seen since boy band dinosaurs Backstreet Boys et al roamed the earth) already made a movie — This is Us — so a reality show is the natural next step (There is nothing natural about reality shows).

Details about the yet-to-be-confirmed new show are still in the works, according to UK rag The Daily Star, but you can bet that, if the price is right, this thing will happen.

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—Robert Stromberg, *Academy Award-winning production designer for Avatar*

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—Donna Karan, *creator of DKNY*

"Very elegant,
very athletic and very skilled."
—John McColgan,
Riverdance Director

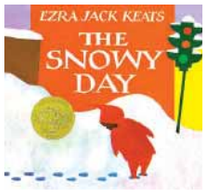
Book in some time for holiday reading

Brrrr. It's time for all good children to curl up with a good book featuring snow. Here are eight to get you started or pass on to gifters.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Snowy Day — Ezra Jack Keats

Reprint edition from Puffin. This 1963 Caldecott Medal winner is the tranquil story of a city boy named Peter who bundles up for crunchy outdoor adventures after discovering it snowed overnight. Cutouts, watercolours and the Brooklyn-born creator's classic collage work. It's considered the first full-colour picture book to feature an African-American protagonist.



Snow — Uri Shulevitz

Reprint edition from Square Fish. First out in 1998. A hopeful "boy with dog" lives in a great, grey city inhabited by doubtful grown-ups transformed with the season's first snowflake. It earned Shulevitz, who survived the bombing of Warsaw as a boy, a Caldecott Honor and may be just the thing to cheer up a modern-day "grandfather with beard" who utters: "It's only a snowflake."

Snowflake Bentley — Jacqueline Briggs Martin

Reprint edition from HMH Books for Young Readers. Another Caldecott Medal winner, this one was also first published in 1998. It tells the story of Vermont's Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley, a self-educated farmer who combined a microscope and an old bellows camera to become the first person to photograph a single snow crystal in 1885.

Frosty the Snowman — Steve Nelson and Jack Rollins

Illustrated by Wade Zahares, this retelling of the seasonal song standard features a trippy looking Frosty in black top hat and green mittens. Includes a three-track CD with the song and others performed by Grammy winner Kenny Loggins.

The Snow Queen — Hans Christian Andersen

Illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline, from Harper. The black crow and troll practically jump off the page in detailed, life-like drawings by the Russian-born artist. The queen, with winged headpiece and icy eyes, lures young Kai to her frozen castle, where he nearly perishes from cold until his rescue by childhood friend Gerda.

Big Snow — Jonathan Bean

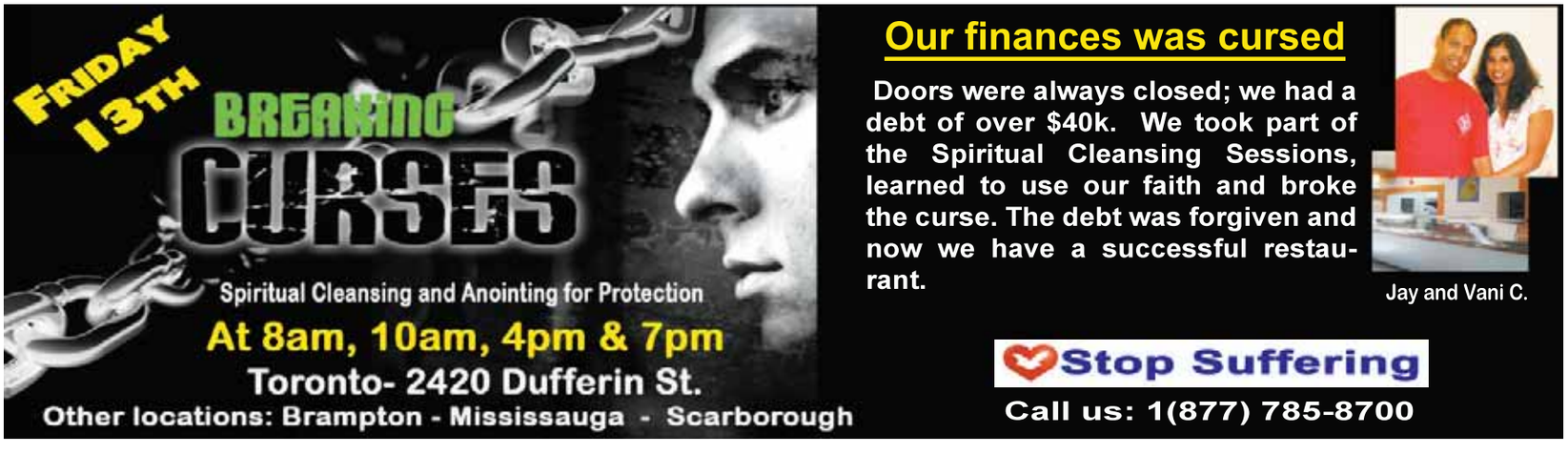
From Farrar Straus Giroux. Big Snow tells the story of an antsy young boy who awaits a big snowstorm. Botching chores with his mother when changing bedsheets, fluffy flour for cookies and sudsy soap bubbles while cleaning the bathroom lead him into a blizzard dream at naptime.

When it Snows — Richard Collingridge

From Feiwel and Friends. A picture book debut that features not only an eerie ode to mega-snow and various large icy creatures, but also a good word at the end for reading itself.

Ladybug Girl and the Big Snow — David Soman and Jacky Davis

From Dial Books for Young Readers. The latest in the bestselling franchise by this husband-and-wife team. Lulu dons her trademark all-red ladybug look, dotted wings and tutu over puffy jacket and snow pants to romp in a magical big snow with her dog, Bingo. Joined by her brother, they create lots of snow animals, including a nice likeness of her pet.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Winter flicks to help pass the time inside

Even when the winter chill forces you indoors, there's still a way to enjoy the frosty weather. Plenty of snowy flicks abound to either celebrate the icy romance of an all-white landscape, or bemoan the cold, stark isolation that comes with darker days.
On the days you just can't bear the outdoors, trade that blanket of snow for a cosy cover on the couch and settle in with one of these winter-set classics. Here's a look at five snow-bound flicks to keep you toasty by the tube.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Fargo

Writers-directors Joel and Ethan Coen capture all the beauty and harshness of a frigid winter season with this brutal 1996 crime thriller. It's full of striking images that linger long after the final credits, many of them featuring a barren northern landscape instantly recognizable to most Canadians. Who hasn't had a near-mental breakdown while scraping ice off a frozen windshield? Star William H. Macy is pitch perfect as bumbling car salesman Jerry Lundegaard, who hatches a brazen kidnapping that goes horribly awry.

Into the Wild

The unforgiving elements of winter feature prominently in this 2007 adventure tale about a young wanderer, played by Emile Hirsch, who sets his sights on a solo excursion to Alaska after graduating from university. His foolhardy odyssey takes him across the continent in search of enlightenment and solitude, and he meets a range of friendly eccentrics along the way. But a cold hard truth awaits this idealistic loner, and his anguished journey — based on real events — is hard to shake.

The Shining

Chills abound in this 1980 horror classic about a young family that is hired to look after a creepy old hotel that is shuttered for the slow winter months. Cabin fever predictably sets in for the crazy-eyed dad, played with unforgettable zeal by Jack Nicholson, and that's just when the hotel starts to reveal it may have a cold, dark past. The weirdness mounts as the snow falls, culminating in a memorable blizzard chase scene and one character's icy demise.

Cold Mountain

It's pretty cold up on Cold Mountain, and we're reminded of that constantly in this 2003 period drama about a Civil War soldier, played by Jude Law, who trudges through a harsh landscape to return to his faithful sweetheart Ada, played by Nicole Kidman. This is a good old-fashioned love story also starring Renée Zellweger, where the burning ardour of separated lovers sustain them through a barrage of hardships that continually work to keep them apart.

The Empire Strikes Back

OK, this kid-friendly classic makes the list largely due to that disgusting blizzard scene where Han Solo cuts open the belly of a passed out tauntaun and stuffs a delirious Luke Skywalker inside to keep him from freezing to death. But of course, that's not Han's only brush with deadly cold in this beloved 1980 Star Wars instalment, there's another chilly scene that's spawned all sorts of quirky merchandise including Han-shaped ice cube trays and Han-shaped chocolate bars.

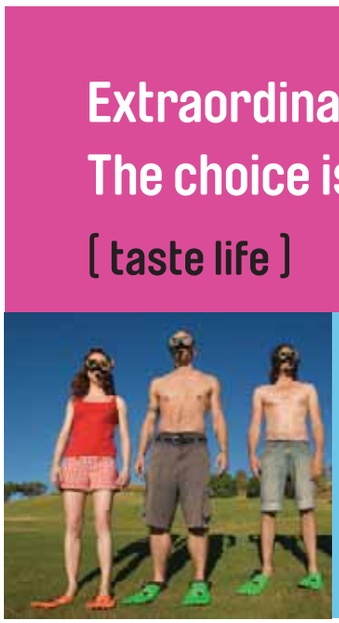
Hollywood

12 Years A Slave tops SAG noms

Steve McQueen's historic saga 12 Years a Slave, Jon Wells' dysfunctional family adaptation August: Osage County, Jean-Marc Vallee's AIDS drama Dallas Buyers Club and the sweeping White House servant tale Lee Daniels' The Butler topped the list of outstanding performances for the 20th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards. 12 Years a Slave scored four nominations, while Osage County and The Butler earned three nominations in Wednesday's announcements. Each of the three films was nominated for overall performance by their casts. Also nominated for best ensemble cast was David O. Russell's 1970s con-artist romp American Hustle.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

12 Years a Slave scored four SAG nominations. CONTRIBUTED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DC assembles its future dream team

New 52. Writers tasked with writing a tale of how heroes change over time

Nearly three years after its debut, DC Comics is pushing its New 52 five years into the future with writers Jeff Lemire, Keith Giffen, Brian Azzarello and Dan Jurgens to examine how heroes change with the passing of time and technology.

The weekly title, The New 52: Futures End, debuts on Free Comic Book Day in May with the first issue of series hitting shelves and digital storefronts later that month. It is the second such weekly book for DC in 2014. The other, Batman: Eternal, launches in the spring as DC celebrates Batman's 75th anniversary.

"Just look at the talent roster that's been gathered. How could you not want to be a part of that?" asked Giffen, who did layouts for DC's weekly comic series 52 in 2006.

Hints about the series have been dropped by DC in recent weeks, with images of Batman Beyond online as well as a mention in the DC All Access web series that saw a pair of logo designs dubbed Five Years Later.

Lemire calls the new weekly series an exploration of DC's past, present and its future.

The New 52: Futures End debuts on Free Comic Book Day in May. CONTRIBUTED

"Really, what we're trying to do with this book is to explore the nature of what a hero is and we're doing that, obviously by playing with the future of the New 52 timeline," he said. "Past present and future all colliding in this story line."

That means exploring the past with a character like Frankenstein, the present with Firestorm and the future with Batman Beyond who is, Lemire said, making what is his first "in-continuity appearance. He'll become part of the New 52." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Super casting news

Momoa may join Batman vs. Superman

Will Jason Momoa get the same harsh treatment from fanboys as Ben Affleck did?

According to the Hollywood Reporter, the Game of Thrones star, who played Khal Drogo on the first season of the hit HBO fantasy, is in talks to join the cast of Batman vs. Superman, which is fast shaping up to be a sort of Love Actually of superheroes, at least in terms of cast size.

Batman vs. Superman stars Ben Affleck as Batman, I must inform you in case you just joined the Internet today. Henry Cavill will reprise his role as Superman and newcomer Israeli actress Gal Gadot will play Wonder Woman. The production hasn't announced what role Momoa would play in the film. Fans speculate that Momoa may be coming on board to play a villain.

Jason Momoa GETTY IMAGES

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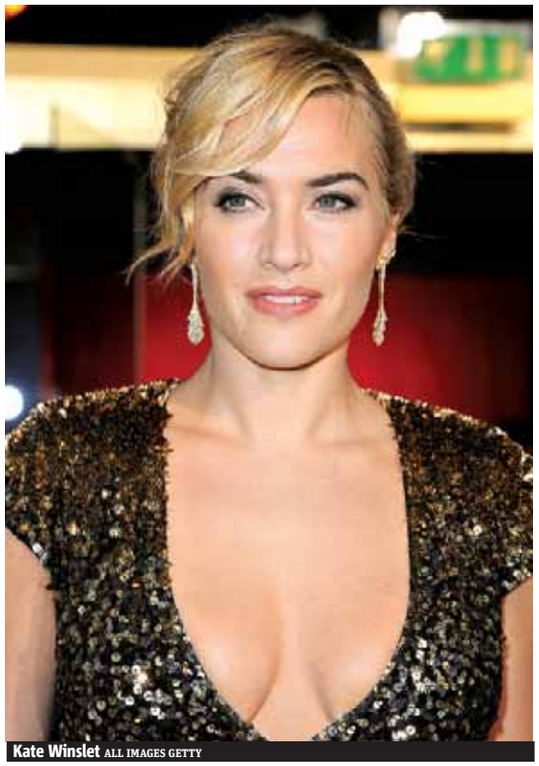

Kate Winslet ALL IMAGES GETTY

It's only baby Rocknroll but mommy Kate likes him, likes him, yes she does

Kate Winslet is a new mom once again. The Oscar winner gave birth to a son, her first kid with new husband Ned Rocknroll, Saturday in the U.K., her rep confirms to People magazine. "Baby and mother are doing great," her rep says, though more information about the boy — including his name — wasn't disclosed. Winslet also has a daughter, Mia, from her marriage to Jim Threapleton and a son, Joe, with second husband Sam Mendes.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Streisand acts as catalyst for amicable Lane and Brolin split

Diane Lane orchestrated a fairly smooth split from ex-husband Josh Brolin thanks reportedly in large part to an unlikely ally: Brolin's stepmother, Barbra Streisand. "She made it clear she would help Diane get everything she needed in her split from her own husband's son," a source tells Radar Online. "Barbra made it clear the divorce needed to go smoothly for the sake of the kids." Things went so smoothly, in fact, that Brolin reportedly turned down an offer to play Batman in the upcoming Man of Steel sequel because Lane will be reprising her role as Clark Kent's mother. "He didn't want to make Diane uncomfortable," the source says. "They're really going to be fine as a divorced couple. Josh admits he's too much of a 'bad boy' to be married to one woman, and Diane and Barbra and even his father James Brolin agree completely."

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Movies teach us that a man with daddy issues is a HERO and a man with mommy issues is a sexually dysfunctional serial killer.

@TomArnold
I've officially lost 80 pounds. Now even my gay friends are complimenting me.

Demi Moore

Broken-hearted Moore ringing in the changes

Now that her divorce from Ashton Kutcher is finalized, Demi Moore is reportedly rushing to erase anything that reminds her of him from her life — including the engagement ring he got her, which she quietly sold recently, according to Star magazine. "Ashton broker her heart," a source says. "Anything that reminds her of him makes her sad, and she wants to be happy." Moore sold the five-carat, emerald-cut anonymously on consignment for $250,000, the source claims.

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Trends Report

Joseph Nogucci is an up-and-coming Canadian fashion accessories brand built by Toronto architecture and engineering students, Mario Christian and Luca Daniel. Go online to Trends Report to read about how the duo transformed sketches that were meant for buildings into designs for bracelets and beads.

Follow Irene on twitter @MetroIreneK or Instagram: kuanirene

www.metronews.ca/voices/trends-report

The year in colour

Orchid is growing on us

Radiant Orchid, a version of the purple hue is Pantone Inc.'s colour of the year for 2014. It follows this year's pick of emerald green.

Officially known as Radiant Orchid, the tropical shade is a colour-wheel contrast to green, said Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. "It's a little different, it's a little off the beaten path, and it's not a primary colour," she explains. "It's an invitation to innovation." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Alice Smith doesn't 'speak makeup'

Natural woman. The soul singer loves her beauty products — she just doesn't always like wearing them. She tells us about her Ramona Quimby hair and her trick to never waking up with dry skin (hint: it rhymes with sheep).

ROMINA McGUINNESS
Metro World News

Alice Smith's second album She was released in March. ALEX ELENA

Alice Smith's deep lyrical voice is so soothing it could almost put you to sleep. Luckily, the one-time Grammy-nominee won't take offence if you do. Why? Because she believes that sleep is nature's way of helping you look pretty and fresh faced.

"Eye bags are a sign that you either need to take a break or go to sleep. So If I'm working late one night, I just make sure I drink a lot of water and go straight to bed. That's it," she explains from her home in Brooklyn. And for those rare moments when shut-eye isn't enough? "In that case I'll use a little bit of MAC Studio Finish Concealer," she adds.

Letting her skin make its own oil

"I wash my face with Sothys Cleansing Cream twice a day, and in the morning I follow up with their Hydradvance Light Hydrating Cream. I don't put anything on at night because that's when your skin is busy working and making oil. You just have to make sure you use really good stuff. So far, I've never woken up with dry skin. I also see my facialist, Mamie McDonald, about once every six weeks and she just does what she needs to do. I always leave with a really clean face!'

Not needing foundation – ever

"I love makeup, but I don't speak makeup. I don't wear a lot of it because it's not good for your complexion. But if I feel a little washed out, I'll do my eyebrows up a little and put some mascara on. But I never wear foundation — ever. Definitely not when I'm on stage. I want to be able to touch my face and it's not like I'm a big sweater, but I might sweat. So I just don't see the point. When I'm performing, I stick to brows, lashes and lips. I love a burnt sienna lipstick but you have to be really feeling it to pull such a bold colour off. And I always carry a tin of Burt's Bees Beeswax Lip Balm with me."

Her 'Ramona Quimby' hair

"I used to dye my hair in college and it was like orange! I don't think it was meant to be that colour…but I liked it. I had a fringe and a short bob, which made me look like Ramona Quimby! I'd love to dye my hair again but I think I'm just afraid of how it would turn out."

Her new album She and making it through the music industry unscathed

"It feels like a lifetime ago that I released my first album but I've always had a lot of support. My family and my friends have always been there for me. I'm not any different. I think I'm just older. I have a three-year-old daughter now, and she's made me re-evaluate and re-examine who I am and who I need to be. For me it's about what kind of person I'm trying to encourage her to be — how to be successful, how to care for herself. And because the only way to teach things is to show, I need to be able to show her how to do all that."

Her beauty icons

"I love Sade…I've always thought she was so beautiful."

Alice lets us take a peek inside her makeup bag

L'Oréal Voluminous Mascara

'I love this because it doesn't come off or flake up. You're not going to have any mascara sitting under your lashes.'

Stila Stay All Day Waterproof Liquid Eye Liner

'I'm always on the road and they sell this at Sephora, meaning I can always get my hands on one when I run out.'

MAC Cosmetics Mineralize Skinfinish Natural Powder

'I use this as a highlighter. I like the fact it blends in really nicely and doesn't make my face shine.'

NARS Cosmetics Velvet Matte Lip Pencil in Dragon Girl

'I love the fact I can use this to colour my entire lip in one go.'

Mac Eye Brows in spiked

'This is perfect for when you want to add depth to your brows.'

Canadian street style

Spotted in: Toronto

Name: Vanessa

Age: 25

Sales rep

What she's wearing
Super sunglasses, American Apparel scarf and riding pants, Zara coat, F as in Frank sweatshirt and Jeffrey Campbell boots.

Her inspiration
"The Internet. Specifically Tumblr. I just look at things other people post and pick and choose what to put my own spin on."

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What a spread! All our precious old decorations, just waiting for their big moment...

Talk about texture! Nabil Nahas acrylic on canvas.... WHAT a great print this would make!!!

Joy to the world, the kitsch has come!

The bold and the brassy. From ugly Christmas sweaters to designer wear, 'tis the season for the extravagant

It's time to carve out some extra space next to those ugly Christmas sweaters as an ever-growing slate of festive apparel and accessories celebrate kitsch as cool.

From gaudy glasses shaped like Christmas trees and menorahs to colourfully garish ties, many holiday revellers continue to seek out and snap up out-there offerings.

"I remember having teachers in school who would come dressed in their finest Christmas sweaters. And now, another generation has adopted those same sweaters, but in a tongue-in-cheek way," said Tyler Schwartz, co-founder of RetroFestive.

"It's just grown into a life of its own when people are trying to outdo each other with the craziest sweater. It's almost like Halloween meets Christmas in the sense that these parties are becoming dress-up parties when we go all out," he added.

"And it's gone beyond sweaters. We've got crazy hats... and glasses. And so the more outlandish and outrageous you can dress, the better."

Value Village is often a haven for the hilarious and hideous of holiday wear.
HANDOUT / VALUE VILLAGE / THE CANADIAN PRESS

War of the wearables

"It's just grown into a life of its own when people are trying to outdo each other with the craziest sweater."
Tyler Schwartz
Co-founder of RetroFestive

Value Village store manager Christine Riddell said there's been an increasing demand year after year for the ugly sweaters in particular — so much so that when the holidays are over, they immediately start collecting them again for next season.

And it's not just limited to knits: Riddell said any garments adorned with sparkles, sequins, flashy colours, weird patterns and scenic embroidery are coveted. Individuals can also get crafty by customizing their own ugly sweater with bells, ornaments, tinsel or garland fastened on by using a hot glue gun or safety pins, she noted.

"I think thrift shopping has gained momentum over the last several years, so this could be part of it," Riddell said of the phenomenon. "But I just think as it gets more visibility and people are talking about it more, people are just seeing how fun and silly it is...And it doesn't cost much.

"It just instantly adds an element of lightness to the party and fun right away without doing or saying anything," she added.

Flare fashion director Tiyana Grulovic said she believes the enduring presence of ugly sweaters and the like is partly nostalgia, partly irony,

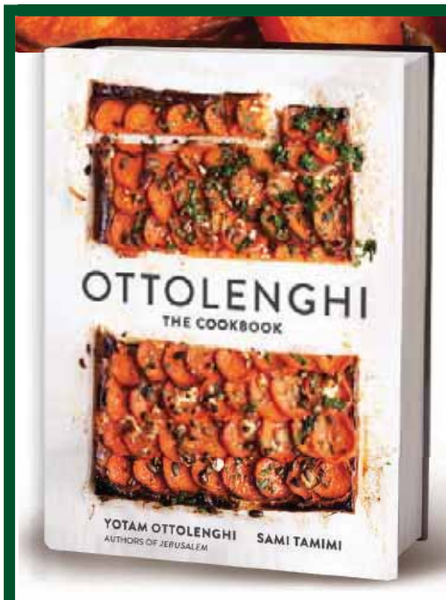
"It's also turning the perceived tackiness on its head. You inject it with a little bit of humour."

What's more, some notable names in fashion are also offering a quirky yet refined approach to festive style - and steeper prices to boot.

A prime example is the Christmas collection from luxury accessories designer Charlotte Olympia, which includes a suede pouch shaped like a Christmas pudding, a gingerbread lady clutch and heels with a detachable ankle strap adorned with gold bells. Items in the line retail from around $500 and up.

"I think the fact that you're getting these things at a very aspirational price point speaks a lot to the trend, because it's not that expected tacky kitsch that we've seen in the past. It's getting a bit more elevated," said Grulovic.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



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Take it back to historic foodie basics

"Today, mackeroons (now spelled macaroons) are a meringue made with coconut, but until the mid-19th century they contained finely chopped or pounded sweet almonds," notes Setting A Fine Table. "Recipes for mackeroons appeared frequently in 17th- and 18th-century cookery books, with varying ratios of sugar to egg whites. Mackeroons were served with wines and liqueurs, or were crushed and layered in trifles or with syllabubs and creams.

"Orange blossom water and rosewater, both made by steeping the flower blossoms in brandy or distilled water, were characteristic flavourings for this biscuit (cookie).

"Musk, another popular flavouring, is an aromatic substance produced by the male musk-deer. It is still an important ingredient in perfumery, but is no longer considered edible.

"By the mid-19th century, vanilla had displaced these flavourings."

Modern Ingredients

- 3 cups (750 ml) whole blanched almonds
- 4 medium egg whites (1/2 cup/125 ml)
- 2 tsp (10 ml) orange flower water
- 2 cups (500 ml) superfine granulated sugar

Historic recipe

1. Take a pound of almonds, let them be scalded, blanched, and thrown into cold water, then dry them in a cloth, and pound them in a mortar, moisten them with orange-flower water, or with the white of an egg, lest they turn to oil; afterwards, take an equal quantity of fine powder sugar, with three or four whites of eggs, and a little musk, beat all well together, and shape them on wafer-paper, with a spoon round: bake them in a gentle oven on tin plates. **THE ART OF COOKERY MADE PLAIN AND EASY (HANNAH GLASSE, 1796)**

Modern Equivalent

1. Line 2 rimless baking sheets with parchment paper.

2. In a food processor, chop the almonds, scraping down the sides of the bowl from time to time, until they are the consistency of very coarse sand with some slightly larger pieces. Set aside.

3. In a separate large bowl, beat the egg whites with the orange flower water until soft peaks form. Add the sugar about 2 tbsp (30 ml) at a time, beating until stiff peaks form. Sprinkle the chopped almonds over the egg white mixture and fold in to distribute evenly.

4. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls (6 ml) about 1 inch (2. 5 cm) apart onto the prepared baking sheets. Bake in the centre of a 325 F (160 C) oven until they are dry to the touch, but still white, and lift easily off the parchment paper, about 12 to 15 minutes.

5. Let cool on the pans on a rack.

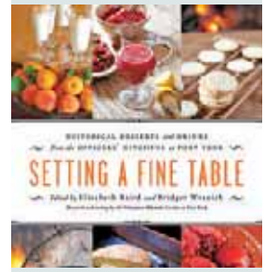
RECIPES EXCERPTED FROM SETTING A FINE TABLE: HISTORICAL DESSERTS AND DRINKS FROM THE OFFICERS' KITCHENS AT FORT YORK" (WHITECAP BOOKS) EDITED BY ELIZABETH BAIRD AND BRIDGET WRANICH

Mackeroons

This recipe makes 80 mackeroons. ALL IMAGES: PAT CROCKER, FROM SETTING A FINE TABLE: HISTORICAL DESSERTS AND DRINKS FROM THE OFFICERS' KITCHENS AT FORT YORK (WHITECAP BOOKS)

Cookbook of the Week

Travel back in time to update classics



Toronto's Fort York is seeped in history but often overlooked is the food element of the times.

Edited by Elizabeth Baird and Bridget Wranich, Setting a Fine Table is a selection of recipes from Fort York.

The dishes, from the officers' kitchen in the Fort, take readers back to a time when food was not only made locally, but found locally — off the land. The 30 recipes include the original, historic recipe as well as its modern equivalent.

METRO

Fresh Strawberry Water

"A 'pottle' is a small cone-shaped basket used to hold strawberries and other soft fruit," notes Setting A Fine Table. "The wild strawberries gathered around York were as flavourful as cultivated berries from the Old World."

Historic recipe

1. Take one pottle of strawberries and pick stalks from them; pass them through a sieve with your wooden spoon; and put in two large spoonfuls of powdered sugar; squeeze one lemon, and let the rest be water; make it palatable, pass it through a sieve and it is fit for use. **FROM THE COMPLETE CONFECTIONER; OR THE WHOLE ART OF CONFECTIONERY (FREDERICK NUTT, 1789)**

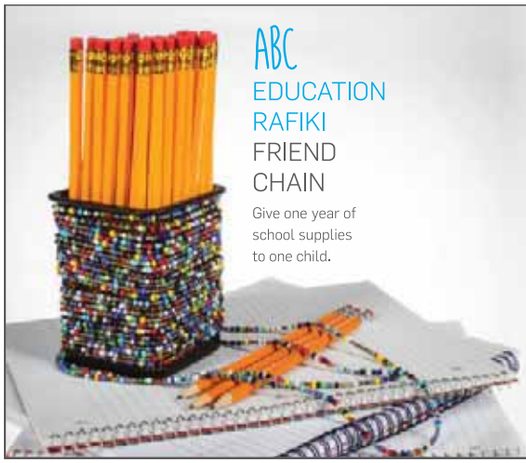
Modern Ingredients

- 4 cups (1 L) strawberries
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) superfine granulated sugar
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 cups (500 ml) cold water

Modern Equivalent

1. Rinse and hull the berries. Either whirl them in a food processor until you have a smooth purée, or crush them with a potato masher. Press the purée through a sieve into a bowl.

2. Add the sugar and lemon juice and then the water, and stir until the sugar dissolves.



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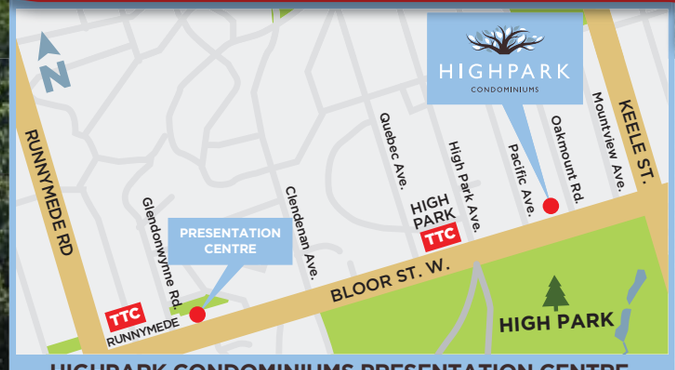

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Critters all through the house

Pawed, clawed, tailed, scaled, beaked, snouted, winged and web-footed: Animals are a delight at any time of year, but what better season than Christmas to have a merry menagerie about? Add creatures big and small to your holiday decor scheme, or give a gilded beast as a gift. This year, it's a snap to source your choice of fauna in two favourite finishes, white or gold.

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

Create wintery-wild drinks with this Polar Bear Cocktail Shaker, $92, potterybarn.com.

From the designer's debut collection of animal curiosities, Kate Spade New York's Woodland Park Cat/Dog Salt & Pepper Set, $30, thebay.com.

Ommm... with the right pose and a trendy gold finish, I get a good vibe from this guy. Yoga Frog, $40, pier1.com.

Adorable and shiny, this bear keeps your coins safe. Sleeping Bear Bank, $18 US, urbanoutfitters.com.

Who wants light? Owl Glow Lamp, $39, urbanbarn.com.

Add some fine swine style to your bookcases. Gold Pig Bookends, $35, cb2.com.

Annual awards

Honouring the best of the GTA

BRYAN TUCKEY
President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) can be found at twitter.com/bildgta, facebook.com/bildgta, and bildblogs.ca.

The building, development and professional renovation industry is comprised of hard-working and dedicated professionals who all play a unique and very important role in building new, complete and affordable communities across the GTA.

It is a culture and a passion that runs deep throughout this entire association.

We are one of the largest employers in the region, creating more than 202,000 jobs in 2012 alone. If you're reading this column in a library or coffee shop, or on a streetcar, you might be surprised to learn that at least one of the people sitting to the left, right or directly across from you is employed by this industry. They are builders, developers, planners, designers, tradespeople, manufacturers, suppliers, marketers and salespeople.

The next time you pass by a construction site, keep in mind that each home in this future subdivision is responsible for the creation of about 200 jobs. In a high-rise development, each crane represents approximately 500 jobs, which is really astounding when you consider that there are more than 256 cranes all over the GTA.

Since 2004, BILD has recognized its associate members for quality, service, professionalism, leadership and innovation when working alongside a builder or renovator on a new home or renovation project.

The annual Associate Awards recognizes the best of the GTA in three distinct categories, including Service Professional, Trade Contractor and Manufacturer Supplier of the Year. What's unique about these awards is that all nominees are evaluated by their customers as opposed to a judging panel.

Completely Wired Corporation was the recipient of the Trade Contractor of the Year award for their professionalism, customer service and ability to make deadlines.

The Manufacturer Supplier of the Year award was presented to Olympia Tile + Stone. This is the third time the company has won this award, having been recognized in 2006 and 2009.

The award for Service Professional of the Year was awarded to Peter McCann Architectural Models Inc. Previous clients have praised it for its workmanship, detail and ability to consistently meet tight deadlines.

I want to congratulate this year's winners and thank them for the integral part they play in our industry's commitment to building new homes for up to 100,000 people who choose to make the GTA their home year after year.

What's hot on the condo market

DUNCAN MCALLISTER

1. Downtown

New Release: The award-series units at 88 Scott, limited collection of one-bedroom, one-bedroom plus den and two-bedroom view homes. Sales centre located at 100 Yonge St. **CALL 416-216-8588 OR VISIT 88SCOTT.COM.**

2. Forest Hill North

Open House: A one-bedroom condo in Forest Hill North. Completely renovated, 836-square-foot suite in a restored building. Head over to 2603 Bathurst St., Dec. 14 and 15 from noon to 3 p.m. **CALL 416-923-4621 FOR INFORMATION.**

3. Etobicoke

Incentive Event: Monarch's Lago condos on the Etobicoke waterfront. Great selection of suites, cash discounts. Visit the sales centre at 2167 Lake Shore Blvd. W. **CALL 416-495-3544 OR VISIT MONARCHGROUP.NET FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

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A rendering of Legacy Park at Thornhill City Centre. CONTRIBUTED

Legacy Park in Thornhill

Meet the condo

- **What.** Legacy Park at Thornhill City Centre
- **Location.** Bathurst Street and Centre Street
- **Builder.** Liberty Development Corporation
- **Architect.** Kirkor Architects
- **Sizes.** From 515 to 1,423 square feet
- **Pricing.** From $230,000 to $694,000
- **Building.** 25 storeys
- **Suites.** One-bedroom, one-bedroom plus den, two-bedroom, two-bedroom plus den
- **Status.** Pre-construction, open to the public
- **Phone.** 905-731-8302
- **Website.** legacyparkcondos.com

The project overview

The architecture of Legacy Park is marked by clean geometric lines and an entranceway with a modernist sculpture. Thornhill City Centre is a master-planned community that integrates nature, amenities, transit and lifestyle around a panoramic central park.

In the neighbourhood

Amenity-rich location, close to a wide variety of shopping and dining, golf courses, parks and conservation areas, libraries and schools. Thornhill Green, Beverley Glen Park, Thornhill Golf and Country Club and numerous other parks are nearby.

Location and transit

Thornhill City Centre is well served by major transit routes, including VIVA and York Region Transit. Less than five minutes to the south, you can link up with the TTC and conveniently travel anywhere in Toronto. Highways 7, 407 and 400 are just minutes away.

Building amenities

The condo will have a state-of-the-art exercise room, sauna, whirlpool and steam room. There's a landscaped rooftop terrace, bicycle-rack room, party room, golf simulator and media room. Each suite is wired for next-generation cable and Internet services.

Legal Matters

Who gets the land-transfer tax rebate?

My wife and I are buying our first home together. We were married last year and have been saving our combined income for a down payment. I owned a condo previously, and I'm using the money I made when I sold it to add to the down payment.

I've heard conflicting reports about who is eligible for the land-transfer tax rebate. What are the guidelines?

LEGAL MATTERS
Jeffrey Cowan
home@metronews.ca

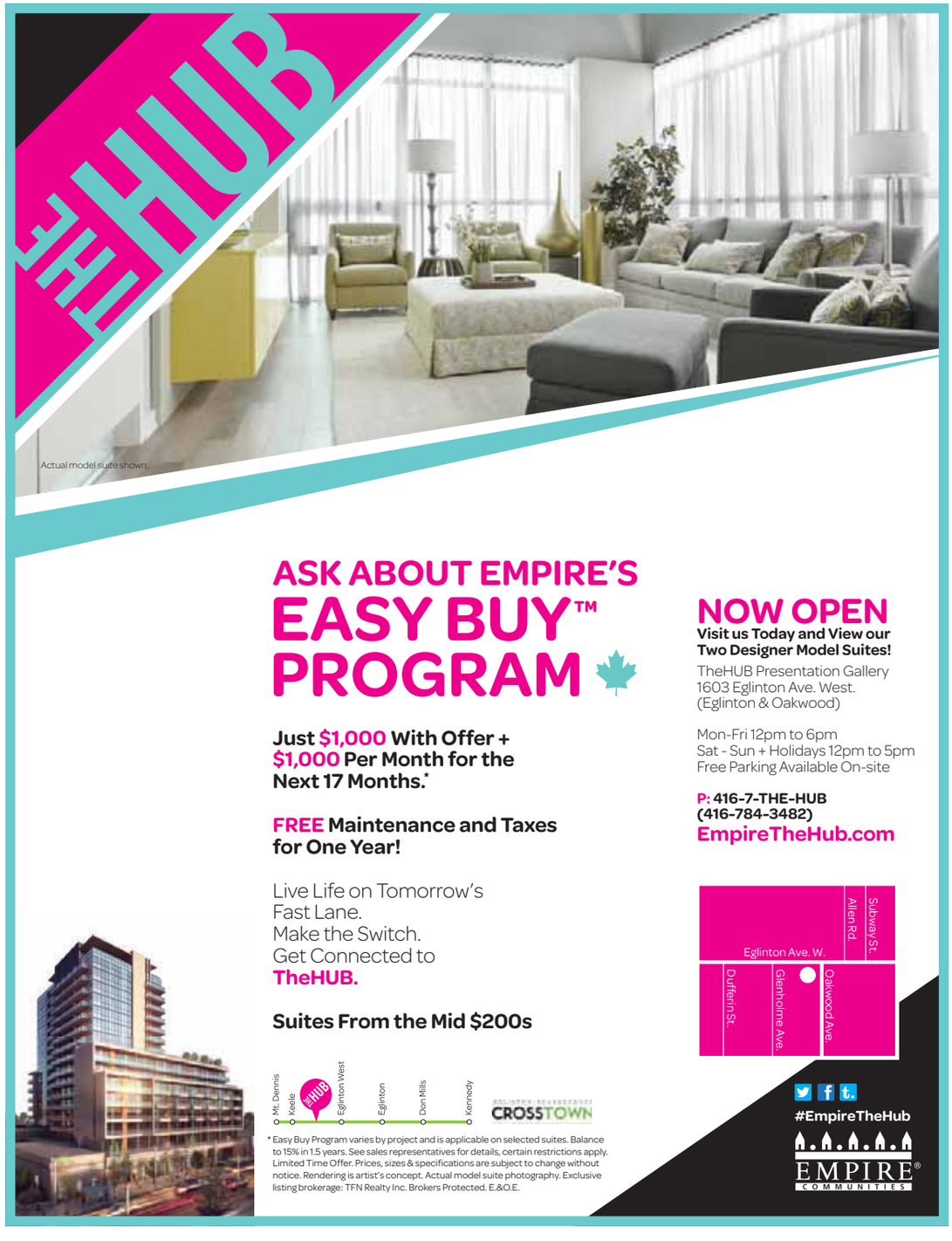
Land-transfer tax is payable to the government based upon the value of the home and is approximately 1.5 per cent of the purchase price in Ontario. The guidelines are as follows:

- If you own or have previously owned a home anywhere in the world, you are not eligible for the rebate.
- If you have never owned a home, but your spouse has during the period that you were each other's spouses, neither of you is eligible for the rebate.
- If your spouse owned a home but sold it before you became spouses, you would be eligible and your spouse would not be.

It is important that you use an expanded definition of spouse that includes common-law partners who have lived together continuously for at least three years; or are in a relationship of some permanence, if they are the natural or adoptive parents of a child.

Land-transfer tax can be several thousand dollars, so consult your lawyer to ensure you're maximizing a potential rebate while not evading any taxes.

Follow Jeff Cowan on Twitter @Cowan_Law or on the website at cowanlaw.ca



REVIEWING RESULTS, WRITING RESOLUTIONS

As the year winds down, I'm reminded that new year's resolutions are around the corner. Whether it's to lose a few pounds, or to save a few more dollars, new year's resolutions are a good way of resetting our priorities and articulating our goals.

New year's resolutions are not unlike business cycles. At this time of year, many companies are measuring 2013 year-end results and finalizing new goals for 2014. At Toronto Hydro, the targets we set are used as benchmarks for our progress throughout the year. They keep us on our game and focused on efficiently providing great service to our customers.

One thing that is always on the books, no matter the time of year, is the safety of our workforce and the public. Thanks to the efforts of our employees, we have an excellent workplace safety record at Toronto Hydro. We received the President's Award from the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association for three million hours without a lost time injury in 2011-2012; and we achieved the award for three-and-a-half million hours in 2013. What's more, since 2007, we have reduced our total recordable injury frequency in the workforce by more than 66 per cent. And our employees are healthy — according to Statistics Canada, our absentee rate is 15 per cent less than the average for public and private sector companies.

We've also reduced the number of vehicles in our fleet by almost 40 per cent.

Most importantly, we are continuing to make significant investments in our aging electricity grid, and our workforce is replacing and refurbishing the power lines, poles, transformers and underground cables that serve many neighbourhoods across Toronto.

I'm proud of Toronto Hydro's successes in 2013. While it was one of our best years on record, it's safe to say we won't be resting on our laurels. We will continue to set the bar high and I expect Toronto Hydro employees will continue to rise to the challenge.

Happy holidays and best wishes for the new year!

Anthony Haines
Toronto Hydro Corporation
president and chief executive officer

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Did you know you have 24/7 access to your account information and can make payments from anywhere that has Internet access?

You can follow Toronto Hydro on Twitter; it's monitored nightly until 10 and even later if there's a major event. You can like Toronto Hydro on Facebook and get updates on residential conservation tips, contests and events.

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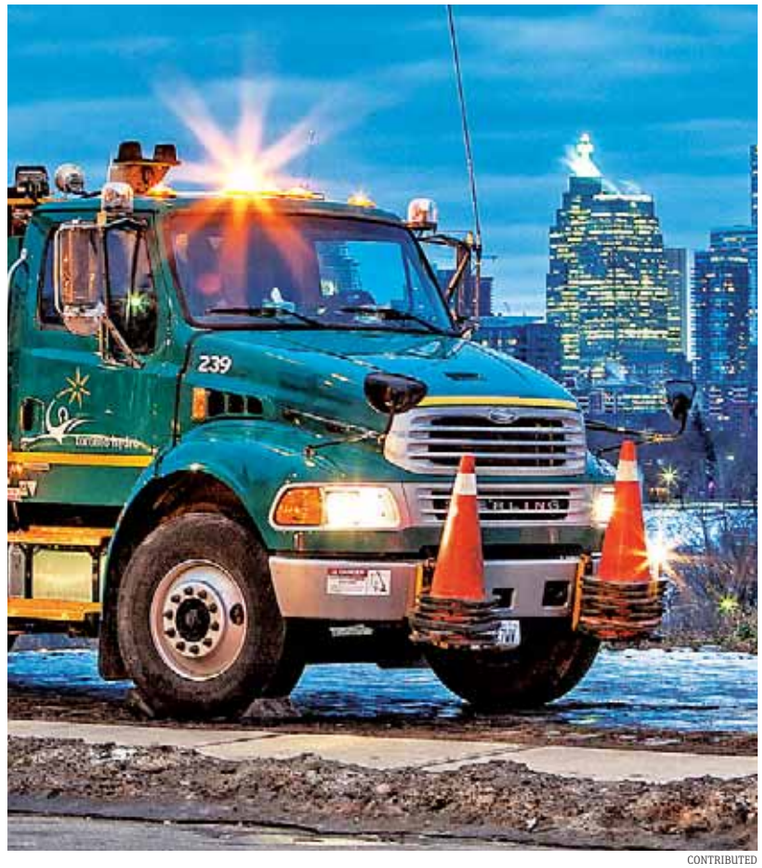

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FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY CUSTOMERS:

• The 12 Days of Christmas campaign kicked off this week on YouTube and Twitter. Find out how you can green your holidays with some fun low-cook, no-cook recipes and easy crafts.

• Get eConnect, Toronto Hydro's electronic newsletter at torontohydro.com/econnect.

SNAIL MAIL:

• Watch for Bright Ideas, Toronto Hydro's newsletter that is delivered with your bill.

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FINDING A NEEDLE IN THE HAYSTACK

Working on high voltage power cables is part of Toronto Hydro's daily business and comes with inherent dangers. That's why Toronto Hydro is always looking for ways to make its working environment safer for crews.

Recently, new technology was added to the armoury of tools that crews use while working on the distribution grid. It's called the Voice Cable Identifier and, in short, it acts as a safeguard to prevent crews from cutting into energized cables. A typical underground vault can contain dozens of live cables that span several kilometres. This can make identifying a specific cable tricky. The tool was introduced to improve safety, but it has also led to increased productivity. Simplifying the cable de-energizing process also reduces overall time spent on a job.

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NHL

Senators' Cowen given 2-game ban

The NHL has suspended Senators defenceman Jared Cowen two games for a head shot on Zemgus Girgensons of the Sabres.

Cowen struck Girgensons in the head late in the third period of Ottawa's game in Buffalo on Tuesday night. No penalty was called on the play.

Girgensons was not injured and later scored the shootout winner for the Sabres. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLB

Hits no longer welcome at home

Major League Baseball plans to eliminate home-plate collisions.

New York Mets general manager Sandy Alderson, chairman of the rules committee, made the announcement Wednesday at the winter meetings. He said player health and increased awareness of concussions were behind the decision.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MLB

Davis goes from Jays to Tigers

Outfielder Rajai Davis and the Detroit Tigers have agreed to terms on a two-year contract worth $9-10 million US.

The Tigers announced the deal Wednesday.

The 33-year-old Davis spent the last three seasons with Toronto and hit .260 this year with six homers, 24 RBIs and 45 steals in 331 at-bats. He made $2.5 million.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Maple Leafs' Frazer McLaren braces for a punch from the Kings' Jordan Nolan on Wednesday night at the Air Canada Centre. RICK MADONIK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

KO'd by the Kings

NHL. Leafs backstop Bernier upstaged against former team by rookie L.A. goalie

Jeff Carter scored midway through the third period as the Los Angeles Kings beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-1 for their fifth straight win Wednesday.

Carter beat former teammate Jonathan Bernier with a wrist shot between the legs on a 2-on-1 at 9:40 for his eighth of the year. Defenceman Paul Ranger failed to keep the puck in the Los Angeles end, creating the odd-man rush.

Drew Doughty and Kyle Clifford, with an insurance goal with 1:59 remaining, also scored for Los Angeles (21-7-4) before 19,375 at the Air Canada Centre.

Martin Jones, a 23-year-old rookie from North Vancouver, earned his fourth straight win in four career NHL starts for Los Angeles with ex-Leaf Ben Scrivens on the bench. Kings No. 1 Jonathan Quick is out injured.

Jones came into the game with a .973 save percentage and 0.65 goals-against average. He had stopped 73 of 75 shots and hadn't been beaten in 142 minutes 46 seconds.

Cody Franson scored for Toronto (16-13-3), which deserved better on the night.

The Leafs were without captain and top defenceman Dion Phaneuf, serving the first half of a two-game suspension for a weekend hit on Boston's Kevan Miller. But winger Joffrey Lupul returned after a seven-game absence due to a groin tear.

The Leafs showed more jump than a Los Angeles team playing for the second night in a row but were unable to convert their advantage into goals.

Still, the Kings came in riding a season-high four-game winning streak, hot on the heels of a 6-0 win in Montreal, and were 11-1-4 in their last 16 games.

The Leafs, meanwhile, had just two regulation wins in their last 17 starts (a stretch during which they went 6-8-3).

Los Angeles had outshot their opponents in 21 of their previous 31 games. In contrast, the Leafs had been outshot in 27 of their 31 previous games.

But on this night, Toronto outshot L.A. 11-8 after the first period, 21-16 after the second and 38-23 at the end.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

On Wednesday

3	1
Kings	Maple Leafs

Trio of new Raptors land in Toronto

John Salmons arrives at the Raptors' practice facility on Wednesday.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Chuck Hayes was parked on the couch watching football, with plans for Christmas shopping later that day, when he got the news.

Patrick Patterson was walking into The Hunger Games: Catching Fire with his mom when his phone started ringing.

It's been a whirlwind couple of days for Toronto's newest Raptors, who were acquired in a trade announced Monday that sent Rudy Gay to Sacramento.

"In the airport with them, on the plane, it's like we ain't left each other's sight the last 24 hours," Hayes said, laughing. "I'm not going nowhere without them if we're in a city we don't know."

Hayes, Patterson and John Salmons arrived in Toronto after the seven-player deal that sent Gay, along with Aaron Gray and Quincy Acy, to the Kings. The Raptors also acquired Greivis Vasquez, who wasn't in Toronto on Wednesday afternoon as he worked through immigration red tape.

"I was sitting on my couch watching TV," Salmons said.

"(I was) shocked, just because it was out of the blue."

Hayes, a 6-6 forward, said he was "hit blindside by the news" with Christmas right around the corner.

They met with coach Dwane Casey, who said he's pleased about the mix of players he's acquired.

"They're the kind of guys that you have to have to physically go against the Brooklyns, the Bostons, the New Yorks, the Miamis, the Indianas," he said

And he hopes they'll be a big boost to the Raptors' second unit that has been one of the team's weak points this season. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Divine intervention

John Salmons was almost a Raptor in 2006, but he backed out of a sign-and-trade deal, saying at the time, "I didn't really feel (Toronto) was where God was leading me."

4 SPORTS

Chan channeling inner child for Winter Games

Figure skating. Canadian Olympian returns to his roots ahead of Sochi 2014

Toronto's Patrick Chan performs at the Grand Prix Final figure skating competition in Fukuoka, Japan on Thursday. SHIZUO KAMBAYASHI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barely 24 hours after flying home from Japan, Patrick Chan was in a Toronto rink inspiring young skaters.

The three-time world champion wasn't thrilled with his silver medal performance at the Grand Prix Final last week in Fukuoka, and spending time with kids was perhaps just what he needed.

"It's great, it's awesome," Chan said with a wide grin. "It's funny because this season for me is all about going back to my roots, and kind of finding the inner kid in me. In order to deal with the pressures of this Olympic year, I kind of had to go back and identify why I skated, and why it's so much fun and why I enjoy it.

Chan was a surprise guest at the evening skating practice, part of his new role as an ambassador for active living for Coca-Cola Canada, a new sponsor. Coca-Cola announced Wednesday it was sponsoring Chan plus Tampa Bay Lightning forward Steven Stamkos and short-track speedskater Marianne St-Gelais.

Chan talked to the young skaters about keeping it fun, and answered questions on everything from how he stays motivated, to when he landed his first Axel (he was nine or 10, he can't quite recall), to how he keeps from getting nervous (he still gets nervous).

The Toronto skater will carry huge expectations into the Sochi Olympics. He's a favourite to win Canada's first ever Olympic gold in men's singles.

Chan, who was fifth at the Vancouver Games four years ago, said part of him is already thinking past the Olympics — more specifically, about what he can give back.

Chan has a couple of days off then will head back to Detroit to prepare for the Canadian championships in early January in Ottawa. Then he makes the final push to Sochi.

He won't take a Christmas vacation this season.

"No Hawaii this time, I won't have a suntan at nationals," he said. "I think all the skaters are staying in Detroit for Christmas, like Kaitlyn (Weaver) and Andrew (Poje). It will be great, we'll make our own little Christmas party or New Years party."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Women's hockey

Poulin's return on hold for U.S. clash

Canada's Marie-Philip Poulin RICHARD WOLOWICZ/GETTY IMAGES

Canada is riding a three-game winning streak against the U.S. in women's hockey, but it hasn't been all smooth sailing for the Canadian women this winter.

Marie-Philip Poulin, who scored twice in Canada's win over the U.S. in the 2010 Olympic final, remains sidelined for Thursday's game in Calgary against the Americans because of a high ankle sprain.

The talented, speedy forward from Beauceville, Que., is expected to be an impact player for the Canadian women again as they prepare to defend the gold in Sochi, Russia, in February.

However, the 22-year-old has appeared in just a handful of Canada's 32 games since September and none against the United States.

"It's been a tough one for sure," Poulin said Wednesday at the Markin MacPhail Centre. "It's always hard to miss a game, especially when you play the U.S."

An opposing player landed on the outside of her left ankle during a tournament against midget triple-A men's teams in September. Poulin re-injured the ankle in her third game back in November.

Poulin has set Dec. 28, when Canada plays the U.S. in St. Paul, Minn., as the next target date of her return.

The exhibition game in Calgary is the third of six between Canada and the U.S. this winter as both teams train full-time for Sochi.

They'll square off again Dec. 20 in Grand Forks, N.D., followed by the game in Minnesota, then Dec. 30 in Toronto. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Sinclair marks her 200th game

Soccer. Canada takes on Scotland Thursday in opening game of Brazilian tournament

Canadian Christine Sinclair
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Christine Sinclair had no idea when she first tugged on a Canada jersey that she'd ever make it anywhere near No. 200.

But on the eve of her 200th appearance, Canada's captain and one of the game's finest female players said it's a testament to how the national women's program has grown over the course of her career.

"Someone like Charmaine Hooper, she played on the national team forever and never made 200 caps," Sinclair told The Canadian Press in a phone interview Wednesday. "Andrea Neil as well ... there just weren't as many games played. Then you look at myself at 200 caps. We have so many players that are above 100 caps, and that had never happened before.

"It just goes to show the support the women's team has been given, and just the sheer number of international games we get to play now."

Neil played 132 games for Canada, while Hooper played 129.

Of the current Canadian women's squad, Diana Matheson has 154 caps, Rhian Wilkinson has 143, followed by Sophie Schmidt (109) and Karina LeBlanc (106).

The 30-year-old Sinclair will earn her 200th cap — yet another major milestone in a career paved with them — when the Canadians play Scotland in the opening game of the Torneio Internacional Cidade de Sao Paolo tournament in Brazil.

The Burnaby, B.C., native has 146 career goals, and is third behind Americans Abby Wambach and Mia Hamm.

Her first game was against China in the Algarve Cup. She was 16.

Brazil, at No. 4, is the top-ranked team in the four-country tournament. The seventh-ranked Canadians play unranked Chile on Dec. 15, and Brazil on the Dec. 18. The final is Dec. 22. THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Boston	31	21	8	2	86	62	44
Montreal	32	19	10	3	85	71	41
Detroit	32	15	9	8	87	85	38
Tampa Bay	30	17	10	3	85	76	37
Toronto	32	16	13	3	87	90	35
Ottawa	32	12	14	6	92	105	30
Florida	32	10	17	5	73	106	25
Buffalo	31	7	22	2	53	92	16

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Pittsburgh	32	21	10	1	98	71	43
Washington	31	17	12	2	98	90	36
Carolina	32	13	13	6	75	91	32
NY Rangers	32	15	16	1	70	84	31
New Jersey	32	12	14	6	73	82	30
Philadelphia	30	13	14	3	68	78	29
Columbus	31	13	15	3	78	86	29
NY Islanders	32	9	18	5	80	111	23

Wednesday's results
Los Angeles 3 Toronto 1
Philadelphia at Chicago
Minnesota at Anaheim

Tuesday's results
Los Angeles 6 Montreal 0
Washington 6 Tampa Bay 5 (SO)
Buffalo 2 Ottawa 1 (SO)
Columbus 5 New Jersey 4
Nashville 4 NY Rangers 1
Florida 3 Detroit 2 (SO)
St. Louis 2 Winnipeg 1
Chicago 6 Dallas 2
Phoenix 3 Colorado 1
Boston 2 Calgary 1
Edmonton 5 Carolina 4 (OT)
NY Islanders 3 San Jose 2 (SO)

WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Chicago	33	22	6	5	122	91	49
St. Louis	29	20	6	3	100	67	43
Minnesota	32	18	9	5	77	75	41
Colorado	29	20	9	0	83	68	40
Dallas	29	14	10	5	83	86	33
Winnipeg	32	14	14	4	83	90	32
Nashville	31	14	14	3	71	89	31

PACIFIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Anaheim	33	21	7	5	106	86	47
Los Angeles	32	21	7	4	88	63	46
San Jose	31	19	6	6	103	78	44
Vancouver	33	18	10	5	88	81	41
Phoenix	30	17	8	5	97	94	39
Calgary	30	11	15	4	79	100	26
Edmonton	32	11	18	3	89	109	25

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Thursday's games — All Times Eastern
Montreal at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Columbus at NY Rangers, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at Ottawa, 7:30 p.m.
Detroit at Tampa Bay, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Dallas at Nashville, 8 p.m.
Colorado at Winnipeg, 8 p.m.
Carolina at Calgary, 9 p.m.
NY Islanders at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Boston at Edmonton, 9:30 p.m.
Minnesota at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

Friday's games
New Jersey at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Washington at Florida, 7:30 p.m.
Edmonton at Vancouver, 9 p.m.

SCORING LEADERS

	G	A	Pts
Crosby, Pgh	16	27	43
Kane, Chi	17	23	40
Malkin, Pgh	8	30	38
Getzlaf, Ana	16	21	37
Tavares, NYI	12	24	36
Ovechkin, Wash	26	9	35
Perry, Ana	20	15	35
Steen, StL	21	12	33
Backstrom, Wash	7	25	32
Thornton, SJ	5	27	32
Kunitz, Pgh	17	14	31
Marleau, SJ	14	16	30
St. Louis, TBL	13	17	30
Zetterberg, Det	11	19	30
Couture, SJ	10	20	30
Kessel, Tor	16	13	29
Sharp, Chi	14	15	29
Karlsson, Ott	8	21	29
H. Sedin, Vcr	8	21	29

Not including last night's games

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Indiana	19	3	.864	—
d-Miami	16	6	.727	3
Atlanta	11	11	.500	8
d-Boston	10	14	.417	10
Detroit	10	12	.455	9
Charlotte	10	12	.455	9
Washington	9	11	.450	9
Chicago	8	11	.421	9 1/2
Cleveland	8	13	.381	10 1/2
Toronto	7	13	.350	11
Brooklyn	7	14	.333	11 1/2
Orlando	7	15	.318	12
Philadelphia	7	15	.318	12
New York	5	15	.250	13
Milwaukee	5	17	.227	14

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Portland	18	4	.818	—
d-San Antonio	17	4	.810	1/2
Oklahoma City	16	4	.800	1
d-L.A. Clippers	15	8	.652	3 1/2
Houston	15	7	.682	3
Denver	13	8	.619	4 1/2
Dallas	13	9	.591	5
Phoenix	12	9	.571	5 1/2
Golden State	12	10	.545	6
Memphis	10	10	.500	7
Minnesota	10	11	.476	7 1/2
L.A. Lakers	10	11	.476	7 1/2
New Orleans	9	10	.474	7 1/2
Sacramento	6	13	.316	10 1/2
Utah	4	19	.174	14 1/2

x - clinched playoff berth; **y** - division; **z** - conference.

Wednesday's results
Orlando 92 Charlotte 83
L.A. Clippers 96 Boston 88
San Antonio 109 Milwaukee 77
Detroit at New Orleans
Philadelphia at Minnesota
Chicago at New York
Oklahoma City at Memphis
Utah at Sacramento
Dallas at Golden State

Tuesday's results
San Antonio 116 Toronto 103
Cleveland 109 New York 94
Indiana 90 Miami 84
Minnesota 121 Detroit 94
Oklahoma City 101 Atlanta 92
Brooklyn 104 Boston 96
Milwaukee 78 Chicago 74
Phoenix 114 L.A. Lakers 108

Thursday's games
L.A. Clippers at Brooklyn, 8 p.m.
Houston at Portland, 10:30 p.m.

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AC Milan marching on

Kaká, right, of Italian club AC Milan duels for the ball with Davy Klaassen of Dutch club Ajax during Champions League play in Amsterdam on Wednesday. The match finished in a scoreless tie, enabling Milan to advance to the Round of 16 while Ajax was relegated to play in UEFA's Europa League tournament. CLAUDIA VILLA/GETTY IMAGES

World Cup mayor hits back at British 'hell-hole' claims

Soccer. London tabloid says fans will risk lives in Amazon frontier city

'Murderous Manaus' mania bites the dust

"We want to dazzle the world and know we can do it."

Mayor Arthur Virgillio, responding to a Daily Mirror newspaper article

It's a good thing the mayor of World Cup city Manaus has a sense of humour. Because some of the stuff being said of late about this historic city deep in the heart of the Amazon jungle is laughable.

Last week, it was England coach Roy Hodgson, expressing misgivings about the city's taxing high heat and humidity.

Then, on the weekend, London tabloid the Mirror turned its guns on what it called "Murderous Manaus," saying "England fans will risk their lives" should they venture to "the crime-ridden hell-hole" to see Hodgson's team play Italy on June 14. So, Mr. Mayor?

"I don't read the Daily Mirror," Arthur Virgilio responded Tuesday, presenting a picture of reasoned calm to visiting reporters who'd come to see this jungle frontier of football.

As for alligators, well, Britain's Prince Charles visited several times without being bitten, he said. And how bad can the city be if Elton John wants to play in its new stadium?

"I hope no snake hurts him," the mayor joked. Haha.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You may think you have to tear everything down and start from scratch but it's not necessary. There is precious little wrong with your life and a few minor changes here and there is all that is required.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
It may at times seem as if you are not making much progress but in a matter of days there will be clear signs that you are on the verge of a major breakthrough.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Your thoughts seem to be a bit heavy and there are certainly one or two areas where you need to get serious. But don't get so serious that all the fun goes out of your life.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
It may be true that someone is saying awkward things about you but there is no reason to get paranoid and start thinking everyone is against you. Whatever you've done, you are still most people's number one.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
It may be hard for you to understand why certain people act in certain ways but there is no point getting worked up about it because you won't change the way they are. Try acting as if you don't care what they do.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you have started on a scheme then you must see it through to the end. Having invested so much time and energy, you cannot give up on it now. Besides, it could work out.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
At some stage today you will realize that you are not going to get far with a joint project, thanks to people dragging their feet. You will, though, make progress in areas where you can work on your own.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
When you get annoyed, you go to extremes and an unfortunate person is going to be in your bad books today. Yes, maybe you will be too hard on them, but it will be a long time before they dare to upset you.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Don't take anything too seriously today because if you do, you may get depressed and start wondering why you bother to make an effort. Snap out of it by focusing on things that make you smile.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You want to help someone who is struggling but you know if you do they will struggle more in the future. They need to learn from their mistakes, painful though that may be.

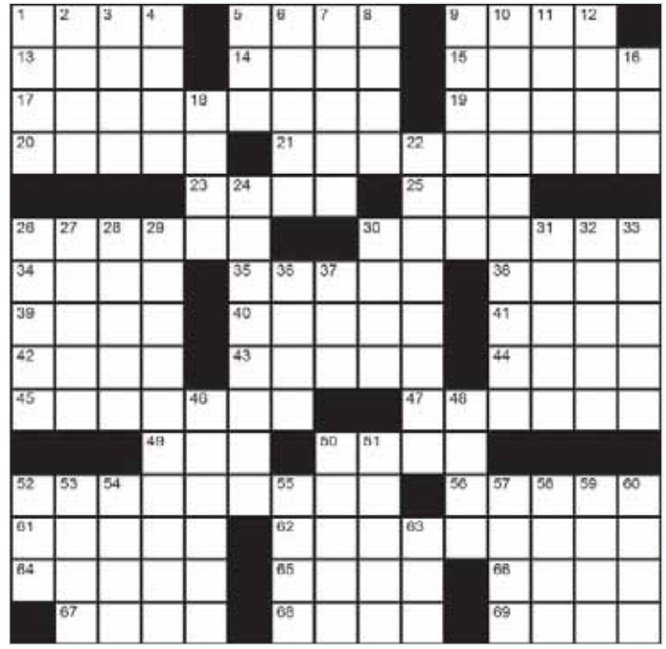
♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You will have to work twice as hard to catch up on things you should have done yesterday. If you apply yourself ,you may get ahead — and get a reward for your efforts tomorrow.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Are you making the most of your time? Chances are you have allowed hours, days, even weeks to slip by without doing anything special. That must now change. SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across

1. Prima donna
5. Cloak: Spanish
9. 2s
13. Plow pullers
14. Caesar's 955
15. Steal a stash, again
17. Nickname of Manitoba's capital city
19. SNL alum Cheri
20. Rock bottom
21. The Band concert film directed by Martin Scorsese, "The __ __" (1978)
23. UK awards since 1917
25. "For __ a jolly good..."
26. Daniel Defoe's 1719 book, Robinson __
30. More like cow juice
34. From-clothes fluff
35. Sitar songs
38. Family suffix in zoology
39. Hodgepodge
40. Get a glass of water to get cold really fast: 2 wds.
41. Telegram
42. Hireling
43. "__ _ go on?"
44. Like some airports [abbr.]
45. Working together well
47. Tropical fruits
49. Montreal's 'me' The Arctic
50. Shoe part
52. 1880 Dostoevsky novel, The Brothers __
56. Overbearing
61. "_ ___ Teenage Werewolf" (1957)
62. Jets competition, when in Colorado
64. Type of mil. mission
65. Surrealist painter, __ Magritte (b.1898 - d.1967)
66. Helix
67. __ __ stretch of the imagination
68. Too
69. And others [abbr.]: 2 wds.

Down

1. This clue: #1-__
2. Corn lily
3. Peddle
4. __-gravity
5. "Green River" gr.
6. Plentiful
7. Impassionate requests
8. Norms, for short
9. Plaster-spreading tool
10. Alberta city south of Edmonton
11. Great pitcher Mr. Hershiser
12. Separate, as laundry
16. Commerce, curtly
18. Fun suffix to 'Switch'
22. 1983 Bryan Adams single: 2 wds.
24. Prehistoric land of
26. Horse-on-cobblestone sounds
27. Amber __, "Dancing with the Stars" reigning champion
28. Employees organization
29. Profession of 2nd Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie
30. __-of-honour
31. Picking from a police lineup
32. Keep one's __ __ the ground
33. Movie studio stocks
36. __-Deucey (Backgammon variant)
37. "Golly!"
46. Comedian/actor Ray
48. Duchess of __ (Subject of Spanish painter Goya)
50. Shack
51. Singer, Faith __
52. Wine aperitif
53. Caught in _ __ of lies
54. Daring
55. __ Phillips (Queen Elizabeth's granddaughter who is an Olympic equestrian)
57. __ and for all
58. William Wallace, for example
59. Mr. LaBeouf
60. Scream
63. Sean Penn's director father

Yesterday's Crossword

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

	6		4	8				
	9		6				1	3
		1	9			6		
						2	7	6
6				1				5
5	8	7						
		3			5	1		
4	5				9		3	
				7	2		9	

Yesterday's Sudoku

7	4	5	6	2	9	1	3	8
9	3	8	7	1	4	6	5	2
6	2	1	8	5	3	7	4	9
4	9	7	3	6	1	8	2	5
8	1	3	2	4	5	9	6	7
2	5	6	9	8	7	3	1	4
3	8	4	1	7	2	5	9	6
1	6	2	5	9	8	4	7	3
5	7	9	4	3	6	2	8	1

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Variable
Friday
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gustotv

when to watch

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
6:00PM	Julia Child- The French Chef					Amazing Wedding Cakes	Julia Child- The French Chef
6:30PM	Martha Stewart Cooking School						
7:00PM	Martha Bakes			Mad Hungry with Lucinda Scala Quinn	World Kitchen	James Martin United Cakes of America	My Kitchen Rules
7:30PM	Donna Hay Fast, Fresh, Simple			Annabel Langbein			
8:00PM	Edible Road Show	Rocco Dispirito - Now Eat This	World Kitchen	Nigel Slater Simple Suppers	Rick Stein Mediterranian	Rachel Allen Cake Diaries	Nigel Slater Simple Suppers
8:30PM				Nigel Slater Simple Cooking		Rachel Allen Easy Meals	Nigel Slater Simple Cooking
9:00PM	My Kitchen Rules				Rocco Dispirito - Now Eat This	My Kitchen Rules	Rick Stein Mediterranian
9:30PM							
10:00PM	Rachel Allen Easy Meals	Rachel Allen Cake Diaries	James Martin United Cakes of America	Donna Hay Fast, Fresh, Simple	Donna Hay Fast, Fresh, Simple	Donna Hay Fast, Fresh, Simple	A Place in the Sun
10:30PM					Annabel Langbein		
11:00PM	Edible Road Show	Rocco Dispirito - Now Eat This	World Kitchen	Nigel Slater Simple Suppers	Rick Stein Mediterranian	A Place in the Sun	Nigel Slater Simple Suppers
11:30PM				Nigel Slater Simple Cooking			Nigel Slater Simple Cooking
12:00AM	My Kitchen Rules				Rocco Dispirito - Now Eat This	My Kitchen Rules	Rick Stein Mediterranian
12:30AM							

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The First Ladies of the Kitchen

MARTHA BAKES

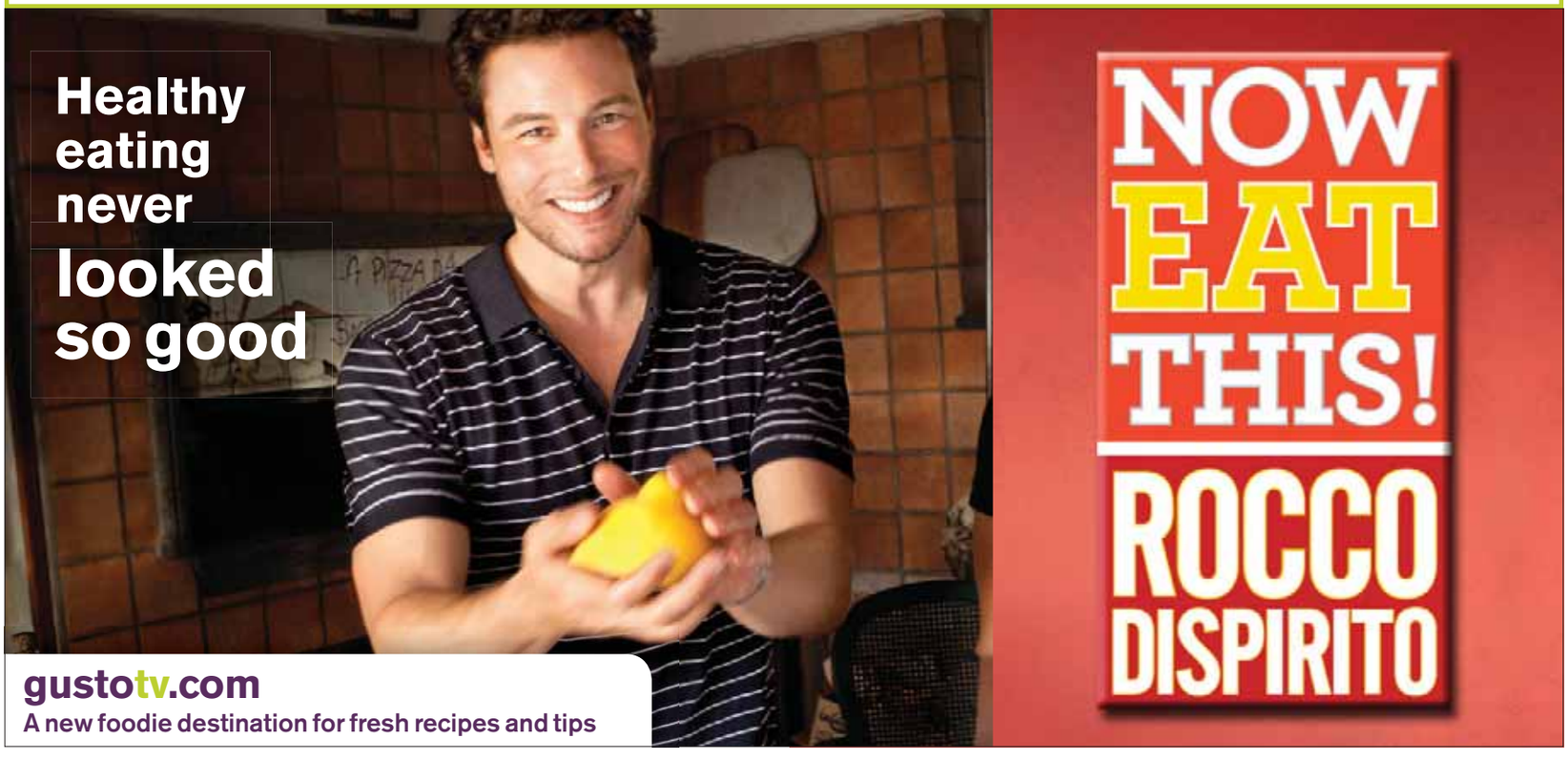
Martha Stewart shares her very best secrets to give home bakers the tools, tips and confidence they need to create the finest desserts and baked goods in their own kitchens, all from scratch. Stewart sets the standards with updated versions of the classics, and adds new angles to some familiar favourites. Learn how to make the perfect cheesecake, a buttery pound cake and how to conquer puff pastry once and for all. Catch Martha Bakes weeknights at 7 p.m. and Martha Stewart's Cooking School weeknights at 6:30 p.m.

FAST, FRESH AND SIMPLE

Join Donna Hay, Australia's cherished celebrity author, food stylist and magazine editor, as she creates delicious meals using her own clever shortcuts and tricks of the trade. With her relaxed approach to food and sought-after signature style, Hay shows that every home cook can prepare beautiful and great tasting meals without any of the fuss. The show exemplifies why her recipes, books and magazines are so well-loved. Donna Hay's Fast, Fresh, Simple weeknights (Monday to Thursday) at 7:30p.m. Back-to-back weekend episodes will air Saturdays at 10 p.m. and Sundays at noon, starting Dec. 21.

JULIA CHILD: THE FRENCH CHEF

Join cooking legend Julia Child as she hosts the pioneering series "The French Chef." One of the first cooking shows to appear on television, it debuted in 1963 and ran for a decade. In the show, Child introduces American cooks to French cuisine using recipes from her best-selling cookbook "Mastering the Art of French Cooking." Gusto TV will air the original black & white series in primetime, uncut and without commercial breaks. Premiering Dec 11 at 7 p.m. (launch). Weeknights at 6 p.m. to follow.



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